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The Dutch Empire between Ideas and Practice, 1600–2000

Edited by René Koekkoek
Anne-Isabelle Richard · Arthur Weststeijn



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Intellectual History in Imperial Practice

René Koekkoek, Anne-Isabelle Richard and Arthur Weststeijn

Where does the Dutch empire fit in global intellectual history? The last twenty years have seen a burgeoning international literature on empire.¹ However, the Dutch empire, writ large, has not benefitted from a similar scholarly engagement. What is the role of longstanding ideas circulating both in historiography and public debate, such as that the Dutch did not ‘do’ empire, just commerce, or that they did not develop (grand) visions about their empire, in this neglect? This volume is a step to

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integrating perspectives on Dutch empire into a broader global examination of visions of empire.² It does so, on the one hand, by examining the trope of Dutch exceptionalism over the long term and from multiple perspectives. On the other hand, it argues that the Dutch case is particularly suited to connect with (recent) historiography that argues that not just canonical texts and speech acts but also meaningful practices are sources for intellectual history.³ In order to understand visions of empire, we need to look beyond systemic thinkers and also examine how various actors, ‘intermediate thinkers of empire’, articulated their visions in practice.⁴ Drawing on the concepts of upward and downward hermeneutics, this entails examining the interactions between ideas and practice; how ideas formed and were formed by socio-cultural and political practice.⁵ An intellectual history thus informed by social and cultural history allows for uncovering visions of Dutch empire expressed by a range of Dutch and other actors as empire was being ‘done’.⁶ Such a history of visions of empire sheds new light on (current) historiography and public debate, precisely because dominant notions within this historiography and debate are rooted in the intellectual history of Dutch imperial practice.

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR: THE DYNAMICS OF DUTCH IMPERIAL (SELF-)PERCEPTION

The starting point of this volume is to show the possibility and importance of tracing ideas of Dutch empire across time. While avoiding teleology, connecting visions of empire of the early modern period to the state-led imperialism and postcoloniality of the nineteenth-twenty-first centuries allows for analysing the deep roots of dominant tropes in public discourse about the Dutch colonial past. A notorious example of these longstanding ideas in contemporary debate involved the then Prime Minister of The Netherlands, Jan Peter Balkenende. In June 2006, he was questioned in the Dutch House of Representatives by opposition parties about the recent recovery of the Dutch economy. Somewhat agitated, Balkenende replied: ‘I don’t understand why you’re so negative and unpleasant about it. Let’s be happy together. Let’s be optimistic! Let’s say: The Netherlands can do it. The VOC mentality, going abroad, dynamics!’ When an indignant murmur rose from the House, the Prime Minister added a somewhat desperate ‘...right (*toch*)?’

Balkenende's reference to the Dutch East India Company (VOC) generated a storm of protest in the following days and weeks. Under pressure of public opinion, Balkenende clarified that he did not want to gloss over the mistakes of the VOC past. He had meant the spirit of commerce and the courage to cross the oceans, not 'the dark age of slavery'. It did not satisfy Dutch-Surinamese action groups who promptly organized a demonstration and demanded apologies from the Prime Minister for his words. The activists sought to underline the interconnectedness of the Dutch role in the history of slavery and a broader underlying colonial mentality. It was a revealing episode in an ongoing series of debates on the Dutch imperial past, in which histories of the VOC merge with discussions about the Indonesian War of Independence, the Black Pete tradition and everyday racism.⁷ In these debates there are those who wish to defend and highlight a positive image of Dutch colonial history and seek to separate the 'golden days' from the 'dark pages'. Others argue that these aspects are necessarily entwined. Much like in other former imperial powers, the Dutch imperial past has become a site of contestation where conflicting visions of historical and cultural identity-formation clash.

In order to understand and contribute to these debates, it is important to situate the various visions of empire they draw upon. Invocations of an alleged great commercial imperial past or a Dutch exceptionalism have a long pedigree (and are not unlike claims about other empires). Particularly at moments of 'national' upheaval or reconstitution, the Dutch empire has been presented as a positive, benign phenomenon, for example in 1941, when Willem van Helsdingen, a retired high colonial official, published the book *Daar werd wat groots verricht* ('Great things were achieved there'). While the Netherlands had recently fallen to German occupation, this book was advertised as providing a compelling argument for the continuation of Dutch colonial rule overseas: 'We have developed the Indies as no other country in the world; we have brought peace and prosperity'.⁸

Such visions of a civilizing mission did not go unchallenged. Already in 1913 for example, Soewardi Soerjaningrat, nationalist and later Indonesian Minister of Education, published the pamphlet *Als ik eens Nederlander was, ...* ('If I were a Dutchman, ...') in response to plans to celebrate the centenary of Dutch independence from Napoleonic France. In it he stated that 'If I were a Dutchman, I would never want to celebrate this centenary in a country that is occupied by us. First give them

their freedom, then commemorate ours'.⁹ Soerjaningrat thus exposed the double standard that many visions of empire entail(ed). For this exposure he was ridiculed and banned from his home country.¹⁰

About a century earlier, when the Netherlands had just regained the independence they hoped to commemorate in 1913, an illustrious ‘Dutch’ commercial spirit rooted in the VOC was explicitly invoked in the two-volume *Nederlandsche bezittingen in Azia, Amerika en Afrika* (‘Dutch possessions in Asia, America, and Africa’). Published in 1818 and written by the Dutch high military officer and future governor-general of the Dutch East-Indies, Johannes van den Bosch, this work offered the new Dutch state a comprehensive review of its imperial possessions—and suggestions how to increase their profitability. In his dedication to King William I, Van den Bosch stated that his work was informed by his wish to ‘restore our weighty possessions overseas and advance the colonial trade to its highest possible prosperity, to restore the good old days of our forefathers and return our fatherland its glory and wealth’.¹¹

The good old days Van den Bosch had in mind were those of the mid-seventeenth-century, the alleged ‘Golden Age’ of Dutch mercantile primacy worldwide. The celebration of Dutch colonial glory and wealth originated in the imperial visions created when the Dutch Republic challenged Spanish and Portuguese global supremacy. In the late 1630s, the apex of early modern Dutch expansion in Asia and the Atlantic, Joost van den Vondel, the Dutch ‘prince of poets’, dedicated a poem to the Amsterdam headquarters of the VOC in which he praised its global commercial enterprise: ‘Wherever profit takes us, to every sea and shore, for love of gain the wide world’s harbours we explore.’¹² There is no hint in Vondel’s poem of the Dutch involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, which took off exactly when he wrote these lines. The optimistic notion of a dynamic ‘VOC-mentality’ has long roots indeed.

These visions of a distinctly commercial Dutch empire were not only formulated in a Dutch context but also by other European observers. For example, in what has been called the ‘first antislavery play’, *Oroonoko, the Royal Slave* (1688), the British playwright Aphra Behn negatively compares the supposedly efficient, commercial and immoral Dutch to the—in her narrative—not too competent British. The assumption that the Dutch have a specific commercial mindset, allegedly different from that of other imperial powers, is a trope shared by Dutch and non-Dutch actors alike.

These brief insights into the deep and widespread roots of Balkenende's notion of a 'VOC-mentality' show the relevance of holding up a mirror to the Dutch colonial past from a long term and transnational/transimperial perspective. Taking its clue from the coat of arms of the VOC, painted in 1651 and displayed on the cover, this volume seeks, firstly, to analyse the Dutch imperial (self-)perception of exceptionality: which image did the VOC present and evoke when it saw itself in the imperial mirror and how has that image influenced the way later (self-)perceptions are styled?

Arguably the most dominant trope in the representations of the Dutch empire is the idea that this empire was somehow 'exceptional' and 'different' from other empires. Most obviously, this discourse of exceptionalism can be observed in the recurring claim that the Dutch empire was essentially a maritime 'trading empire' rather than an example of expansionist imperialism—a claim also made manifest in the 1651 arms of the VOC, which show a merchant ship sailing between Neptune and a mermaid. The first part of this volume explores the origins and development of this rhetoric. Catia Antunes demonstrates why this 'spin' was useful in the contest of the Dutch Republic with the Portuguese and Spanish empires in the seventeenth century, and Arthur Weststeijn and Benjamin Schmidt show how it became a dominant vision of empire in the European Enlightenment. In essence, this early-modern narrative is still at play in contemporary historiography and public debate as Jennifer Foray argues. The prism of intellectual history allows us to uncover the long-term roots of this exceptionalist discourse and to explain why it is increasingly being challenged in recent scholarship.¹³

VISIONS OF DUTCH EMPIRE IN PRACTICE

The second aim of the volume is combining more traditional intellectual history methodologies with an examination of the ways in which visions of empire have been developed in concrete imperial practice. This approach connects to the historiographical debate on (global) intellectual history where scholars such as Christopher Bayly have called to look beyond those that produced canonical ideological statements and for the importance of examining intellectual history through meaningful practices. As such it builds upon the notions of upward and downward hermeneutics that acknowledge the constitutive interaction between concepts and practice.¹⁴

As Alicia Schrikker refers to in her chapter, historians have long cherished the claim that the Dutch did not develop visions of empire: ‘they just counted’.¹⁵ Arguably, this idea of ‘just counting’ makes the Dutch empire a privileged site to broaden our methodological toolbox. The way agents of empire ‘counted’ and expressed why they did so can provide insights into their visions of empire. This approach implies analysing the various ‘media’ of imperial (self-)perception, negotiation and control, including media in the sense of speech acts such as texts and broadcasts, but also for example urban architecture, visual imagery and meaningful practices such as courtroom procedures and colonial bureaucracy.¹⁶

Besides broadening the source material, this approach also entails broadening the subjects of analysis. It therefore opens up space to analyse the ideas of different types of agents of empire, both intellectuals and systemic thinkers as well as ‘intermediate thinkers of empire’ as Sanne Ravensbergen shows. The second part of the volume accordingly zooms in on numerous case studies of, among others, colonial officials, army officers, politicians and broadcasters who, interacting with agents from across the globe, articulated and negotiated specific visions of empire. Exploring a variety of practical contexts such as colonial governance, parliamentary debate, legal practices and radio broadcasting, the volume considers intellectual history in imperial practice broadly, aiming to reach a thorough understanding of the links between visions and practices of empire. Such an inclusive selection of sources and contexts, we argue, not only sheds new light on the intellectual history of the Dutch empire, but also explores new ways of writing the intellectual history of empire in general.¹⁷

Furthermore, by examining intellectual history in practice, in employing an upward hermeneutic, this volume shows how the predominantly ‘Dutch’ visions analysed in most chapters were in fact the result of day-to-day negotiations and interactions with other agents of empire from across the globe. The specific focus of this volume on the Dutch empire therefore should not be seen as a restatement of the long-dominant trope of Dutch ‘exceptionalism’, or as referring to a circumscribed set of actors, but rather as an invitation to look for entanglements between different national and imperial contexts through the prism of the Dutch empire.

These linkages operate through space, in a European imperial framework, between East and West, between Dutch imperialism in Asia and in the Atlantic and Caribbean. They also run through time: as the example

of Balkenende's 'VOC-mentality' already indicates, the exploration of the history of imperial visions and (self-)perceptions requires a long-term perspective from the early modern period to the postcolonial age. As in the case of other empires, existing scholarship on the Dutch empire tends to be divided between early-modern and modern approaches, with a clear caesura generally being placed around 1800: the transitional period when the Dutch Republic ceased to exist and the Kingdom of the Netherlands came into being, while the Dutch empire changed from a Company-based imperial space to an imperial nation-state.¹⁸ Although these transitions may seem to justify a division between the early-modern and the modern period in terms of political, economic and social history, an intellectual history shows the fundamental continuities in the ways in which the Dutch empire was envisaged and remembered between the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries.¹⁹ An approach that argues for example to take the Congress of Vienna as a turning-point in Dutch and European imperial history, risks missing these continuities and therefore also misunderstanding the early-modern roots of contemporary imperial narratives.

Indeed, revealing and contextualizing the continuities and ruptures in the development of various concepts, ideas and visions of empire from the sixteenth century to the postcolonial era can suggest new ways to rethink the relationship between Dutch imperial history and its enduring impact on contemporary public culture and collective memory. While the traditional narrative held that there was no such thing as a Dutch empire, but only commercial enterprise rooted in an alleged VOC-mentality, approaches that seek to fragmentize Dutch imperial history into different temporal and spatial units risk bringing back that same old narrative. The concept of Dutch empire would then once again disappear out of sight, also in contemporary public debates. To counter that risk, this volume analyses the variety of features of Dutch imperialism since 1600 from a single comprehensive perspective, arguing that if we want to speak meaningfully about the Dutch empire today, we should analyse how historical actors thought, spoke and wrote about it in the past.

CONTENTS

To place the traditional narrative of Dutch imperial exceptionalism in a critical historical perspective, the first part of this volume traces the roots of this narrative in the early-modern period and discusses its ongoing

dominance in historical scholarship and public debate. In the first chapter, Catia Antunes explores the characteristics of the Dutch chartered colonial companies, the VOC and WIC, which have generally been seen as a unique feature of Dutch colonial enterprise and as the institutional foundation of the alleged commercial nature of Dutch imperialism. According to the existing historiography, the VOC and WIC were created mainly for economic reasons, and the resulting empire-building was only a contingent consequence of this economic rationale. However, as Antunes shows through a contextual analysis of the original charters of the VOC and WIC, this long-dominant view is mistaken. Co-opting the interests of the Dutch States-General and private entrepreneurs, the VOC and WIC were far from unique as means of organization for colonial exploitation. Indeed, they closely resembled comparable colonial mechanisms of the Spanish and Portuguese empires, and the Dutch colonial build-up in the seventeenth century was framed in similar terms to those of its Iberian predecessors. Moreover, the companies offered the States-General the opportunity to ascertain its domestic sovereignty and claim sovereignty overseas, in line with what Iberian sovereigns had been doing since the fifteenth century. The only truly exceptional feature of the early modern Dutch imperial enterprise, Antunes argues, was its openness to foreigners to participate in colonial expansion. This conclusion is especially important for our understanding of the national as well as international dimensions of the early-modern Dutch empire: while empire-building strengthened the sovereign claims of the ‘national’ state embodied by the States-General, it was also driven by non-Dutch agents.

The second chapter by Arthur Weststeijn continues to uncover the intellectual roots of the exceptionalist narrative of the Dutch empire as a trading empire. Starting from a Dutch colonial text written in Arabic, this chapter shows how this narrative originated in the humanist culture of the Dutch Republic in the pre-VOC years around 1600 and became ingrained in elite and popular culture in the following decades. While Dutch colonial rule overseas was clearly imperial in nature, its representation in the metropolis cherished the illusion of a non-imperial commercial enterprise that befitted the republican and corporate self-image of the Dutch Republic, especially of the city of Amsterdam. Analysing the ways in which this narrative surfaced in texts, imagery and urban architecture, including ephemeral triumphal arches and prominent buildings such as the Amsterdam Town Hall, Weststeijn argues that the idea of a non-territorial commercial empire gained weight because of its dominant

manifestations in the Dutch public sphere around 1650. In the eighteenth century, when Dutch colonial expansion had come to a standstill, this idea was further elaborated in the visual culture of the European Enlightenment, especially in a series of frontispieces that celebrated Dutch commercial imperialism in the guise of a Company-Republic. As Weststeijn claims, the dominance of this representation of empire in terms of a corporate instead of a national entity, may explain why the concept of a ‘Dutch empire’ never materialized, unlike, for example, in early-modern Britain.

Benjamin Schmidt provides in Chapter 3 a further analysis of the ways in which prominent examples of Enlightenment culture effaced the Dutch role as a colonial actor by fashioning a European figure in its place. Schmidt calls this the hyper-imperial perspective, a vision of empire that, although created in Dutch print shops, promoted a distinctly continental vision of global expansion, replacing a territorial Dutch empire with a European empire of geography. While this chapter and Chapter 2 discuss the transnational context in which the Dutch empire developed, highlighting the similarities and differences between Dutch, Iberian and British imperial projects and visions, this chapter argues for analysing the intellectual history of the Dutch empire from a continental and global perspective, taking the example of the Dutch in Japan to show how Dutch imperial practice was turned into a pan-European vision by Dutch and non-Dutch actors alike, with Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* as a case in point. Accordingly, a paradox can be discerned in the early-modern intellectual history of the Dutch empire: although the Dutch imperial project, as argued by Antunes, strengthened the claims for national sovereignty by the States-General, its representation in texts and images occluded this national dimension and highlighted either its local and corporate aspects, in Weststeijn’s analysis, or, in Schmidt’s words, its hyper-imperial character.

The long-term consequences of this early-modern narrative are discussed in Chapter 4 by Jennifer Foray. The chapter reflects on a number of recent historiographical interventions in the field of modern Dutch imperialism and decolonization as well as the challenges of studying these subjects. It argues that, at least in part, such challenges stem from persistent, even reflexive claims concerning the ‘exceptional’ nature of Dutch imperialism and decolonization. Rather than examining the historical origins, as the previous chapters have done, or the merits of these claims of Dutch exceptionalism, Foray explores how these claims

of Dutch exceptionalism and uniqueness continue to shape academic and popular understandings of these subjects, as seen in recently published studies, museum exhibits, and public exchanges between scholars. Simple linguistic devices, such as the ‘yes, but...’ (*ja, maar...*) phraseology, have been used to qualify the Netherlands as somehow different from other empires and therefore outside the realm of meaningful comparison. The chapter supports the creation of a comparative, far-reaching ‘New Imperial History’ undertaken by a global community—and perhaps a new generation—of scholars examining the history and legacies of the Dutch empire.

The chapters in the second part of this volume explore how visions of Dutch empire emerged out of and in interaction with imperial practices both overseas and in the metropole. Whereas superficially they may seem ‘Dutch’ visions, the focus on how they developed in practice shows that actors from across the globe, be they other colonial agents, transnational movements or local populations had a formative influence.

The chapter by Alicia Schrikker surveys the crucial period of the dismantling of the VOC and ensuing political bickering over the future of the Dutch empire in Asia. It argues that the VOC—and the later colonial archive—functioned as institutional memory that contained canonized knowledge and absorbed local experiences and mixed this with current political ideals. It is within this blend of practice, memory and ideas that we can locate fragmented yet lasting expressions of Dutch colonial ideology. Despite the constitutional and geographic transformation of the Dutch empire, the chapter argues that Dutch colonial culture in Asia did not transform radically, but rather gradually and that the visions and practices of the colonial state can only be understood in relation to its Company past, building upon the legacy of the VOC as a state-like creature, with territorial claims where authority was mediated and executed through Dutch-Indigenous institutions like *landraden* and other civil courts in rural Sri Lanka, the Cape, Ambon and Java’s Northeast coast.

René Koekkoek builds on the chapter by Schrikker and examines the neglected era of the late eighteenth-century Batavian Revolution and the revolutionary debates in the metropole about the future political architecture of the Dutch empire. He argues that it was in the turbulent context of Atlantic imperial revolutions, uncertainty, international warfare, and the massive slave revolt on French Saint-Domingue, that Batavian revolutionaries transformed the company-ruled empire into a state-ruled colonial empire. Informed by ideals of the new nation-state’s ‘unity and

indivisibility' but severely checked by an unpredictable geopolitical reality, Batavian revolutionaries had to negotiate their imperial ideas and ideals. The ideal of a constitutionally unified empire of equal citizens was qualified from the beginning and soon abandoned. Yet Batavian revolutionaries laid the conceptual and constitutional foundations of the imperial sovereignty of a centralized Dutch state, although the immediate impact on actual colonial practices was initially limited.

The chapter by Sanne Ravensbergen offers a critical assessment of the vision of the rule of law as well as the actual practices of the liberal colonial jurists within the legal plural space of the *landraden* (colonial law courts) in nineteenth-century Java. Liberal Dutch lawyers and judges in Java, 'intermediate' thinkers of empire, depicted themselves as 'bearers of civilization', and subsequent historians have repeated this. The chapter asks what changed in the legal practice of the *landraad* after Dutch Liberals managed to introduce an independent president and what happened to the visions of the liberal jurists after they started practising them in the reality of the colonial courtroom. It shows that not only the Dutch president of the court, but also the Javanese court members and other local elites, 'practised' their visions. The visions and practices of all these actors interacting together formed and shaped a colonial legal culture in nineteenth-century Java. Although the visions of colonial jurists are often overlooked, as they were not the producers of high scholarship, they did contribute to an 'industry' of liberalism by expressing their views in societies, publishing pamphlets, writing in liberal magazines, and arguing in Dutch parliament. By taking the developing visions of the practicing colonial jurists seriously, it becomes possible to connect imperial visions to jurispractice.

In his chapter, Vincent Kuitenhoubwer explores visions of empire in the practice of radio broadcasting in the Netherlands Indies of the 1920s and 1930s. He argues that the early history of radio broadcasting in the Netherlands Indies throws a revealing light on the 'blind spots' of the late Dutch colonial state. More in particular, Kuitenhoubwer maintains that the original motivations behind the Dutch-Indies Radio Broadcasting Company—to create more imperial unity and strengthen 'Dutch elements' in the colony—paved the way for two developments. First, the broadcasting company started to function as an (informal) 'arm' of the Dutch colonial authorities as it assumed the responsibility of upholding social order and monitoring public opinion. Second, the distinction made by the broadcasting company's Advisory Board between

'Western' and 'Eastern' listeners was in reality much more diffuse. The 'imperial' ether thus offered the opportunity to broadcast 'subversive' music—*Krontjong*—that was embraced by the Indonesian anti-colonial nationalist movement.

The chapters by Koekkoek, Schrikker, Ravensbergen and Kuitenhoubwer demonstrate how visions of empire were forged in the confrontation with practical realities. Clearly, ideas shaped practices. But practices shaped ideas too. Such practices could be both external and part of larger transnational and imperial contexts, such as in the revolutionary 1790s, and internal, such as in the long-term institutional memory of the VOC past. Moreover, 'practiced visions', for example, of Dutch lawyers in the 1840–1880s could underpin colonial rule and a colonial legal culture. But as Kuitenhoubwer shows, the confrontation of imperial visions by Dutch broadcasters with the actual practice could also lead to unexpected and unintended outcomes that undermined Dutch colonial rule.

Finally, in his epilogue Remco Raben offers a wide-ranging, *longue durée* interpretation of the historical development of visions of Dutch empire. First, he explores a recurring series of tensions, if not outright contradictions, between metropolitan visions of empire 'at home' and imperial praxis abroad. In part, these tensions could exist and continue to exist, Raben explains, by the skewing, selecting, filtering and muting of information about the colonial empire that was made available for 'home consumption'. Second, he points to the notion of 'distance'—geographical, mental as well as intellectual—as a structuring condition for the emergence of imperial visions. Empire, in short, happened 'elsewhere' and this allowed a vision of exceptionalism to develop. Lastly, Raben argues that although the voices of 'the colonized' have been muted, neglected and repressed throughout Dutch colonial and postcolonial history—they have always been there.

This volume, then, does not pretend to offer the last word on the subject but rather aims to open up a field of research that needs to be explored in more detail. It argues that an intellectual history of empire benefits from a source base that includes meaningful practices and takes intermediate thinkers seriously, embedded in long term, transnational and transimperial perspectives. We hope the various essays in this volume can serve as an invitation for more comprehensive and integrated studies that will bring to the fore the variety of voices involved in the intellectual history of imperial practice.

NOTES

1. See Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, ed., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). See also e.g. David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Gabriel Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and Its Empire 1759–1808* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Duncan Kelly, ed., *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Sankar Muthu, ed., *Empire and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Anthony Pagden, *The Burdens of Empire: 1539 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).
2. The volume results from a conference at Leiden University and accompanying discussion forum that critically explored this discrepancy in the existing scholarship on Dutch colonial history: René Koekkoek, Anne-Isabelle Richard, and Arthur Weststeijn, ‘Visions of Dutch Empire: Towards a Long-Term Global Perspective,’ *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 132, no. 2 (2017): 79–96; Andrew Fitzmaurice, ‘The Dutch Empire in Intellectual History,’ *Ibidem*: 97–109; and Susan Legêne, ‘The European Character of the Intellectual History of Dutch Empire,’ *Ibidem*: 110–120. These three (open access) articles provide a wide-ranging discussion of the existing historiography on the intellectual history of empire and on the Dutch empire in general.
3. C.A. Bayly, ‘The Ends of Liberalism and the Political Thought of Nehru’s India,’ *Modern Intellectual History* 12 (2015): 605–626, 613.
4. Emma Rothschild. ‘Language and Empire, c.1800,’ *Historical Research* 78 (2005): 223–226; Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Lives of Empire: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
5. For upward and downward hermeneutics see David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 8; C.A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge

- University Press, 2011), 343; and Anthony Giddens, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
6. Glenda Sluga and Timothy Rose, ‘Introduction,’ *Modern Intellectual History* 12, no. 3 (2015): 523–528, 528.
 7. The contributions to these debates are too numerous to list. For a recent intervention that also gives an overview of the development of these debates over the last decades see Larissa Schulte Nordholt and Remco Raben, ‘Het postkoloniale debat is vooral politiek. “Principes? Niet overzee”,’ *De Groene Amsterdammer* 143, no. 6 (February 2019). For the term everyday racism see Philomena Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991), 52.
 8. As cited in: C. Fasseur, ‘Nederland en het Indonesische nationalisme. De balans nog eens opgemaakt,’ *BMGN* 99 (1988): 21–45, 21.
 9. R.M. Soewardi Soerjaningrat, *Als ik eens een Nederlander was, ...* (Bandung, 1913), 16.
 10. E.F.E. Douwes Dekker, *Onze Verbanning* (Schiedam, 1913).
 11. Johannes van den Bosch, *Nederlandsche bezittingen in Azia, Amerika en Afrika. In derzelver toestand en aangelegenheid voor dit Rijk, wijgeerig, staatshuishoudkundig en geographisch beschouwd*, 2 vols. (The Hague: Van Cleef, 1818), x.
 12. Joost van den Vondel, ‘Op het OostIndischhuis,’ in *Blyde inkomst der allerdoorluchtiughste koninginne, Maria de Medicis*, t’Amsterdam (Amsterdam, 1639), 40: ‘Al waer de winst ons voert, na alle zeen en kusten. Gewinzcucht liet tot noch geen havens onbezocht.’ Translation taken from C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600–1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1977), 28.
 13. For recent scholarship see for example: Remco Raben, ‘A New Dutch Imperial History: Perambulations in a Prospective Field,’ *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 128, no. 1 (2013): 5–30; Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe After Empire: Decolonization, Society, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); and Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
 14. See esp. the literature in note 5.
 15. See also Martine van Ittersum and Jaap Jacobs, ‘Are We All Global Historians Now? An Interview with David Armitage,’ *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (2012): 7–28.
 16. Cf. Bayly, ‘The Ends of Liberalism and the Political Thought of Nehru’s India.’
 17. In this we follow the approach suggested by Andrew Fitzmaurice in ‘The Dutch Empire in Intellectual History.’

18. For imperial nation state see Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation State: Négritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
19. A possible Dutch imperial meridian: cf. C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (Harlow: Routledge, 1989); David Todd, ‘A French Imperial Meridian, 1814–1870,’ *Past and Present* 210, no. 1 (2011): 155–186.

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PART I

Exceptionalism in Visions of Dutch Empire



CHAPTER 2

Birthing Empire: The States General and the Chartering of the VOC and the WIC

Cátia Antunes

Historical narratives of the European maritime expansion overseas are synonymous with tales of ‘discovery’ of places and peoples and subsequent empire-building in all its facets. However, historiography regarding the Dutch case constitutes an exception in that general and specialized knowledge regarding Dutch maritime expansion overseas is overwhelmingly entrenched in the idea of exceptionalism, with the chartering of Dutch commercial companies for long-distance overseas trade standing as a milestone of differentiated policy and behaviour and contrasting with the Iberian empire-building experience at the start of the European maritime colonial build-up. This need to underline exceptionalism compared with the Portuguese and Spanish strategies and practices reflects a continuation of Dutch early-modern discourse that partly justified the creation of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), but more emphatically the Dutch West India Company (WIC), as a means to take the war against Habsburg Spain beyond the geographical constraints of Western Europe. Within this logic of justification, the VOC and the WIC

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appeared to early-modern people, as much as to contemporary historians, as innovative players in matters of global warfare and, at the same time, as exceptional, new and efficient vehicles for conducting commerce across different continents.

This chapter challenges the assumption that the VOC and the WIC were created as chartered commercial companies for the efficiency of long-distance trade alone and argues that they were instead the mechanisms devised by the States General, the sovereign collective body of the Dutch Republic, for the specific purpose of deploying empire. I demonstrate that the creation and development of a Dutch empire was not a contingency of the commercial activities of the Dutch chartered companies or the behaviour of their employees, but rather a conscious political decision taken at the inception of these companies. My argument is predicated on an in-depth analysis of the original charters issued to the companies by the States General in 1602 and 1621 respectively, and on a comparison of these charters' contents with the mechanisms and processes used by Portuguese and Spanish kings when designing, implementing and governing their colonial domains. My hypothesis is that even though chartered (later joint-stock) companies were indeed innovative elements in the early-modern European landscape, as empire builders, they were no different from their Iberian predecessors.

WHAT WAS NEW ABOUT THE DUTCH CHARTERED COMPANIES?

Dutch historians have traditionally been keen to underline the exceptionality of the Dutch chartered companies, with particular emphasis on the VOC. Their arguments for doing so are fourfold. In the first place, chartered companies in the Netherlands were juridical precursors of joint-stock companies.¹ As such, they were paramount in challenging the principles of Roman law that rendered the development of such juridical *personae* impossible.² At the same time, becoming a joint-stock company made the VOC a pioneer in terms of ownership (shares and bonds) and in differentiating between ownership and management (including differentiated liabilities). In this way, it stood at the cross-roads of financial innovation and institutionalization of specific property rights in the Dutch Republic, an innovation that quickly crossed the borders of the Dutch state and spread into other Northern European markets, especially London.³

The second argument is that the companies brought about change in the way maritime warfare was used to achieve economic goals and promote maritime exchanges. This change brought greater effectiveness to the waging of war, but also greater efficiency to trade itself.⁴ The implications for warfare were not, furthermore, confined to the overseas context as the States General often used the companies' resources to fight European wars, too.⁵

The third argument is that the companies served to bundle socio-economic interests in Asia and the Atlantic into a single enterprise, thus avoiding, on the one hand, competition between Dutch subjects overseas and in the domestic markets and, on the other hand, sustaining social cohesion in matters of trade. This was a necessary development in a country that had been at odds, with a civil war (often referred to as a Revolt), since 1568.⁶ This latter view has recently been challenged as social and economic cohesion does not seem to have been at the core of the chartering of the companies, given that many *voorcompagnieën* did not participate in or challenged the charter of the VOC, while private entrepreneurs openly refused to abide by the provisions imposed by the WIC when it was chartered.⁷

The fourth argument is that the companies were private institutions (because they were owned by private investors) whose ownership could be transferred in primary and secondary markets.⁸ This transferability of property rights through the buying, selling and mortgaging of company shares was not only a novelty in itself, but also opened the door to multiple innovations in the financial markets in the Republic, especially in Amsterdam, a phenomenon that later spread to other European financial centres. It is questionable, however, whether the companies were indeed private institutions with state participation (through the States General), or whether the companies were public institutions where private parties held shares and were allowed to contribute to managing the companies. In the case of the VOC, the company would seem to have been private because ownership and management were evidently in the hands of private individuals, and the States General remained absent from the company's managerial organization. In the charter of 1602, however, the granting authority, the States General, demanded a share in the company in return for payment of 25,000 Flemish pounds. This capital was designed to be invested in equipping the company's fleets for the first ten years of its existence. The States General would bear the same risks, but also receive the same profits, as all the company's other shareholders.⁹

Interestingly enough, the States General did not use this share, which can be seen as a loan or an advance on prospective profits, to claim a seat in the administration of the company. Twenty years later, however, this is exactly what it did when claiming one of the nineteen seats in the body responsible for managing the WIC. This seat was granted after a similar advance, this time of one million guilders, to be repaid in five years (instead of in ten years, as in the case of the VOC).¹⁰ Even though the proportion of one in nineteen does not suggest a clearly advantageous position for the States General, the extraordinary subsidies that continued to pour from the Generality treasury into the WIC, mostly for the purposes of conducting war in the South Atlantic and for the Dutch colony of Brazil (1624–1654), boosted the importance of that one seat at crucial moments, with the result that the WIC can probably best be described as a public–private partnership rather than as a fully private enterprise.¹¹

In short, what was specifically exceptional, and certainly new, in the Dutch chartered/joint-stock companies was their impact on the financial and political economy of the Dutch Republic and consequently on the international financial markets, as so eloquently demonstrated by Oscar Gelderblom. As a means of organization for the purposes of colonial exploitation, however, they were far from unique.

WHAT WAS THE MANDATE OF THE VOC AND WIC AS A MEANS TO STRUCTURE COLONIAL EXPLOITATION?

An analysis of the original texts of the charters bestowed upon the VOC and the WIC by the States General identifies the framework within which the latter saw these companies' *raison d'être*. These charters clearly state the areas of intervention for the companies overseas, thus framing the envisaged jurisdiction that the States General was claiming in Asia and the Atlantic, as has often been addressed in traditional scholarship regarding the companies.¹² But the States General went further than that by clearly stating that these envisaged jurisdictions were to be bestowed upon the companies as a privilege, and would include not only the freedom to trade within specific geographical confines, but also exemptions from taxation, along with various other advantages and freedoms.¹³ These privileges have somehow been neglected by current scholarship, even though they stand at the core of how the States General envisaged

its relationship with the VOC and the WIC. The companies were not called into existence in their own right, but rather by favour and privilege bestowed by the acting sovereign upon a very select group of people. In this sense, the company charters differed little from the regime of privileges granted to private parties entrusted with the colonial exploitation of the Portuguese and Spanish domains. These private parties, too, were able to participate in colonial endeavours by the grace and privilege bestowed upon them by their sovereigns.¹⁴ Furthermore, the charters fit rather well into a notion of governance typical of societies of the *Ancien Régime*, according to which social and economic corporatism was developed by the distribution (and thus the framing) of privileges by the sovereign (usually a king or a noble lord).¹⁵ Like elsewhere in Western Europe at the time, a policy of privilege was used by a relatively weak sovereign to bind specific social groups to the body politic and, in so doing, allowing, on the one hand, a certain degree of sovereignty to be shared by a select few and, on the other hand, strengthening the sovereign power of the States General by co-opting that same group. In the case of the Spanish empire, this co-opting of interests between the state and private colonial entrepreneurs has been conceptualized as the stakeholdership of empire.¹⁶

The idea of the charters as a set of privileges bestowed upon the companies not only had implications for the relationship between the state and a specific socio-economic elite of a privileged few, but also as an internal means to establish sovereignty. As has been widely acknowledged in the political history of the Dutch Republic, the States General was weak and often challenged by the claims of sovereign rights exerted by major cities and provinces on their own jurisdictions.¹⁷ By taking over the process of allocating privileges for overseas trade and expansion, the States General was sending a very strong message to its competitors for sovereignty in that it simply withheld the right of cities and provinces to be the source of the privileges set out in writing in the charters.

Perhaps the most iconic privilege bestowed upon the companies was that of tax exemptions. These served two purposes. On the one hand, they created economic incentives for investors to bind themselves to the companies as doing so meant the right to ship and store goods in warehouses without having to pay taxes in the cities housing the chambers of the companies.¹⁸ In the case of the VOC, these tax benefits also applied to goods transported by the company, but that had previously been taxed in the market. With regard to these exemptions,

specific reference was made to spices, Chinese silk and cotton cloths, in a clear attempt by the States General if not to interfere, then at least to influence the company's trading priorities in Asia.¹⁹ This type of economic interventionism, which was also reflected in the creation of the charters themselves, places the States General within a rather common path among Western European states at the time, namely that of a protectionist regime for shipping, trade and exchange in overseas spaces. Despite the frequent claim that Dutch domestic markets were free of mercantilist impositions (which, admittedly, they were on paper), the regime of tax exemptions granted to the companies gave them the competitive advantage they needed in the Dutch domestic markets to protect themselves against colonial products imported from the Iberian empires and sold in the major Dutch cities through intra-European trading networks.

At the same time, these tax exemptions also carried another meaning altogether. While the companies were exempt from paying specific taxes by the States General, these were taxes that fell within the jurisdictions of the urban governments. In effect, therefore, the exemption factually appropriated the right of those cities to determine for themselves whether to exempt the companies. So if it can be argued that the charters provided the States General with a broader sovereign jurisdiction overseas than it actually had domestically, the case of the tax exemptions supports the argument that the charters were also used to advance the States General's sovereignty claims at home. Future research may clarify the extent to which urban governments accepted this attempt at curtailing their sovereignty without a swift response.

A regime of privileges, even in societies of the *Ancien Régime*, could represent a risk to the system of law and order necessary to maintain a functioning state. That was more so in the case of the Dutch Republic, where civil war, followed by political and religious strife (in the form of the Eighty Years' War of 1568–1648) framed by an international war (the Thirty Years' War of 1618–1648), aggravated social, political and religious tensions in an already heavily armed and militarized society. For that reason, privileges had to be matched with a sense of shared gains, which often translated into mechanisms of redistributive privileges, incomes, and rights or freedoms. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that both charters specifically contemplated the compulsory redistribution of opportunities to achieve profit. One of these mechanisms was the obligation for all ruling chambers of the companies to make imported products

from overseas available to other chambers if these chambers ran out of produce or were hit by bad luck, such as if their ships had sunk or were apprehended by privateers of enemy powers. In practice, this meant that all the chambers should have been on an equal footing when fulfilling promises to wholesalers in their own communities, thus distributing equal prospects of profits among all.²⁰

The principle of redistribution, as a mirror of the privileges established by the States General, is still present in the stated principle that the companies arose from a consensus among the previously owned enterprises that joined together to form the new chartered bodies, on the one hand, and for the common good of all those living within the jurisdiction of the States General, on the other hand. Regarding, however, the inclusion of all *voorcompagnieën* for Asia in the formation of the VOC, or the Atlantic operators' voluntary participation in the WIC, historiography has as of late demonstrated that not all *voorcompagnieën* simply melted into the VOC, nor did most of the Atlantic operators willingly join the WIC. So even if the idea of inclusion for the common good is very adamantly stated in the charters, only a few operators were actually convinced of the desirability of joining the companies at the time of their inception.²¹

Institutional, rather than personal, redistribution also had a significant place in the establishing of the charters. The companies were expected to use violence at sea to fight the enemies of the States General; in the case of the VOC, the charter specifically mentions Portuguese and Spanish ships. Prizes of war at sea were to be divided according to the custom adopted within the European jurisdictions of the States General; possible conflicts with foreign powers arising in respect of these prizes would fall within the jurisdiction of the admiralties, rather than of the companies themselves.²² This opened the door for the companies to be prosecuted within the framework of the Dutch judicial system, with the specific cases of prizes of war being adjudicated to the admiralties, a phenomenon recently explored by Kate Ekama.²³

Regulation and final jurisdiction over the privateering campaigns of the companies were thus brought under the authority and sovereignty of the States General. This not only showcases the sovereign's goal of controlling the military actions of the companies, but also demonstrates how imposing an institutional framework for conflict resolution actually encased the States General's will to claim a certain measure of control over the violence permitted to the companies on the international

stage. While it would go too far to state that the States General sought a monopoly on violence, as we saw nation states claiming during the nineteenth century, this may well have been one of the first steps in that direction within the borders of the Dutch Republic.

The States General furthered its control over the commercial companies by incorporating clear provisions for the governance of a still-to-be-built empire into their charters. The inclusion of these provisions in the original charters meant that the States General was expecting colonial empire-building to be a natural consequence of creating the companies, thus contradicting the long-standing assumption that the companies were created for commercial purposes only. As well as being allowed to establish diplomatic relationships with foreign powers in Asia and the Atlantic, the companies were permitted to conclude commercial treaties and wage war against other powers. Even if some have seen these provisions as proof of the companies turning into a company-state, they held the caveat that all those diplomatic relations, commercial treaties and wars could be signed and fought only in the name of the States General and of the companies (in this order). This, in turn, was no different from the way that Iberian captains, governors and viceroys were allowed to do the same in the name of the Iberian kings, and for their greatness and glory.²⁴

The States General went further still: the granter of the charters was so certain that the companies would be building fortresses and founding settlements that it made provisions for governing the newly acquired territories after settlement. For that purpose, the sovereign established the military, judicial and religious jurisdictions concomitant to empire-building by allowing the companies to appoint men of war, governors and justice officials and establish other services needed to defend, administer and maintain law and order in the new domains of the States General.²⁵ To ensure the loyalty of the future colonial officials, the States General demanded that all appointees to these positions should swear an oath firstly to the States General and secondly to the companies.²⁶ Even if some may argue that these provisions were empty of meaning, they were used in practice in conflicts between colonial officials, the companies and the States General. Contrary, for example, to the WIC's wish to dismiss the Governor-General of Brazil, Johan Maurits van Nassau Siegen, during the 1640s, the latter refused to leave Brazil on the grounds that his assignment and commission had been bestowed upon him by the States General and sealed with an oath, and so he had no obligation to obey the company.²⁷

A close, in-depth reading of the charters consequently results in some conclusions that partially question the generalized idea that the Dutch commercial companies were created for economic reasons alone and that empire-building was a contingency of those companies' economic deployment. What the charters clarify is that the States General expected a colonial build-up through the companies' actions and that, from the outset, it framed that build-up in very similar terms to those of its Iberian predecessors. As demonstrated above, the States General created the VOC and the WIC in accordance with the principle of bestowing privileges upon a specific social group that would, in turn, become a corporatist body within Dutch society. This phenomenon has been identified in multiple Western European societies during the *Ancien Régime* and, for the Dutch case, translates most eloquently as the *familial state*.²⁸ This distribution of privileges not only normalizes the Dutch sovereign experience, but also underlines its banality when it came to using such privileges to curtail urban and provincial jurisdictions and thus establish a stronger role for the central state, as embodied by the States General.

It has also become clear that the birth of a Dutch empire did not arise as a by-product of the commercial expansion of the VOC and the WIC, but was instead a goal in itself for the States General. The latter used the charters not only to regulate—firstly in its own name and secondly in the name of the companies—the international relations to be developed with other powers outside Europe, but also to establish the institutional and jurisdictional organization of the empire, and the means to govern it. The social contract regulating the relationship between the States General and its colonial officials, who at the same time were employees of the commercial companies (in this order!), was an oath that was often manipulated by officials overseas to gain advantage over the companies.

In its ability and ambition to use the companies as mechanisms of empire-building in order to extend its domestic jurisdictions and ascertain its domestic sovereignty, and simultaneously to augment its domain by defining jurisdictions and claiming sovereignty over territories overseas, the States General innovated little on what its Iberian sovereign counterparts had done since 1415. What was certainly an innovation, however, was the use of a new financial mechanism (joint-stock companies) to finance the costs of empire-building by diverting those costs from metropolitan taxpayers and onto the balance sheets of private investors, who in turn were able to develop their commercial activities within a framework of substantial tax exemptions or rebates.

WHAT WAS THEN EXCEPTIONAL ABOUT THE DUTCH COLONIAL ENTERPRISE?

The exceptionality pertaining to the use of the VOC and the WIC as a means to enable the Dutch overseas expansion and to further a Dutch colonial empire derives from a detail that seems to have eluded most contemporary historians. The charters of both companies clearly state that participation in the companies was open to all those born or living within the borders of the Dutch Republic.²⁹ This equality conceded to subjects of the States General and foreigners is particularly significant for three reasons.

In the first place, this was the first time that a European state participating in maritime overseas expansion and colonial build-up openly allowed foreigners to freely participate in a framework of privileges on an equal footing with its own subjects. Although foreigners had been allowed to invest and participate in the colonial explorations and exploitation of the Iberian empires, they were allowed to do so by personal privilege of a specific king, usually as a reward for services to the monarchy, or by investing in partnerships with entrepreneurs who were subjects of the Iberian kings.³⁰

Secondly, allowing non-subjects to participate in the companies obviously facilitated the raising of funds, as certain prominent foreign merchant communities were particularly wealthy.³¹ At the same time, it held the promise of including commercial groups such as the Italian or the Portuguese nations and the business community of the Southern Netherlands, in which many colonial traders held important positions. These traders' inclusion in the group of prominent investors opened the door to the transmissibility of knowledge and best practices to deal with overseas polities and trade organizations that would otherwise have been lost to the companies.

Lastly, opening the pool of investors to non-Republican subjects also created the incentives needed for some regular suppliers of colonial goods to be diverted to the Dutch urban markets and included in the pool of investors in the companies. This had two added advantages. On the one hand, it decreased the competition for the supply of colonial goods in the Dutch domestic market, and thus increased the market share for the chartered companies and possibly also the price per traded product. On the other hand, it also meant a step towards intensifying the economic war against Habsburg Spain. By allowing foreign

investment in the companies, the States General could count on Genoese and Portuguese investments that would then be diverted from indirect investments through Cadiz or Lisbon and instead flowed directly into the chambers of the companies, especially in Amsterdam.³² According to Herbert Bloom, the Portuguese nation invested heavily in the VOC, albeit in the form of multiple small shares, the lowest of which was for 450 guilders and the highest for 13,500 guilders. The tax levied on the income of members of the Portuguese nation reveals that, by 1652, the greatest share of this community's revenue was attributable to gains on VOC shares.³³ The Portuguese nation's participation in the WIC was also significant, rising from 4 to 10% of the total investment between 1658 and 1674. The extent of this increase is substantiated by secondary information that roots the issuing of privileges to the Portuguese nation in 1655 to allow settlement in New Amsterdam, specifically in the fact that members of that nation were prominent investors in the company.³⁴

Even if, at first sight, this opening-up of participation in colonial investments will probably be read by historiography regarding the Dutch Republic as yet another sign of religious tolerance towards Catholics and Portuguese Sephardic Jews, the economic consequences of such a liberal provision in the charters clearly went deeper than cultural and religious tolerance alone. It also served the threefold purpose of diverting direct and indirect investments in the Iberian empires towards the Dutch companies and, with this, gaining knowledge and expertise on the practice of long-distance trade (especially in Asia); capturing the interest of wealthy merchant communities such as the Genoese and the Portuguese, and decreasing the numbers of wholesalers and retailers in colonial goods in the Dutch domestic markets by letting some of these men operate within the framework of the companies.

However, the inclusion of foreigners as investors in the companies did not necessarily produce the expected results. Most members of the Genoese and Portuguese merchant nations in Amsterdam continued their trade in Iberian colonial products through the inter-European trading networks linked to Amsterdam, using the companies not as their main colonial investment, but rather as just one part of their colonial portfolio. Members of the Portuguese nation remained particularly active on the West Coast of Africa and in Brazil and, later, Suriname, and continued to be major investors in the Asian trades through family members in Lisbon.³⁵ But, perhaps more importantly, this community used and abused the privileges of the city of Amsterdam, corroborated and

accepted by the States General, to instigate proceedings in Dutch urban, provincial and high courts against privateering actions of the companies that affected their ships and cargoes,³⁶ as well as to demand (and attain) the States General's support in rescuing their private colonial property from the hands of the Portuguese Inquisition or the Portuguese government in Brazil upon the loss of the short-lived colony of Dutch Brazil.³⁷

CONCLUSION

There is little exceptional about Dutch maritime expansion overseas and its concomitant development of an empire when compared to the Iberian experience that preceded it. Empire-building stood at the centre of the charters granted to the VOC and the WIC, as evidenced by the organizational frameworks defined and set in motion in those documents, even prior to any commercial activities on the part of the companies. Furthermore, even the simple act of conceding a charter was informed by *Ancien Régime* standards of bestowing privilege upon private parties for the mutual benefit of the central state and social corporatist groups in the struggle to centralize and defend state power against other candidates claiming similar sovereignty (in this case cities and provinces), while at the same time binding an important socio-economic group to the destinies of the state. This privilege primarily translated into a plethora of tax exemptions that allowed the companies to operate in the Dutch domestic markets to the detriment of other domestic and foreign competitors present in those same markets.

What would seem to have been an innovation brought about by the companies was the transformation of the charter into a new juridical regime that formatted the development of a joint-stock company. This financial innovation has been brilliantly mapped out by Henk den Heijer and Oscar Gelderblom, who assess the broad societal consequences for Europe of this development.

And what would seem to have been exceptional in the tale of Dutch Republican colonial build-up was not the nature of the companies, or what they were expected to do and within which frameworks, but rather the groups who were welcome to join such endeavours. Nowhere in the history of Western European empire-building in the early modern period, either before or after the chartering of the VOC and the WIC in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, were foreigners put on an equal footing with subjects in matters of colonial participation. It was

this extraordinary feature, brought about by the need for knowledge and capital and as means to discourage competition rather than as a result of religious tolerance or toleration, that informed the future actions of both companies, where the majority of employees were non-Dutch subjects and the colonies governed by the companies remained welcoming to Europeans of different origins.

NOTES

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3. Giuseppe Dari-Mattiacci, Oscar Gelderbloom, Joost Jonker, and Enrico Perotti, ‘The Emergence of the Corporate Form.’ http://cepr.org/sites/default/files/events/papers/6708_DARI%20MATTIACCI%20-%20The%20Emergence%20of%20the%20Corporate%20Form.pdf, 16-04-2019.
4. Oscar Gelderblom, Abe de Jong, and Joost Jonker, ‘An Admiralty for Asia: Isaac le Maire and Conflicting Conceptions About the Corporate Governance of the VOC,’ in *Origins of Shareholder Advocacy*, ed. J.G.S. Koppell (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 29–60.
5. Erik Odegard, ‘The Sixth Admiralty: The Dutch East India Company and the Military Revolution at Sea, c. 1639–1667,’ *International Journal of Maritime History* 26, no. 4 (2014): 669–684.
6. Femme S. Gaastra, *De Geschiedenis van de VOC*, rev. ed. (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003); Henk den Heijer, *De Geschiedenis van de WIC* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2007).
7. Kate Ekama, *Courting Conflict: Managing Dutch East and West India Company Disputes in the Dutch Republic* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2018), especially Chapter 2, pp. 56–100. Catia Antunes, ‘From Binary Narratives to Diversified Tales: Changing the Paradigm in the Study of Dutch Colonial Participation,’ *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 131, no. 3 (2018): 373–379.
8. Gaastra, *De Geschiedenis van de VOC*; Den Heijer, *De geoctrooierde compagnie*; Gelderblom et al., ‘The Formative Years,’ 4.
9. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 10. In the original: ‘Ende tot erkentenisse ende recognitie van desen octroye ende tghene voorschreven is sullen die vande voorschreve Compagnie aen ons betalen de somme

van vijftende twintich duysent ponden tot veertich grooten Vlaems tstück die wy Inleggen inde Equippage vande Eerst thien Jarige Rekeninge daervan tot proffyte vande Generaliteyt genoten ende gedragen sal wordden winste ende risicque gelyck alle andere participanten in dese Compagnie sullen genieten ende dragen.'

10. NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 9: 'Hebben voorts belooft, ende beloven mits desen, dat wy dese compaignie tegens eenen yeglyck sullen mainteneren ende defenderen inde vrye zeevaert ende traficque, ende ten dien fine deselve te hulpe commen met een somme van thien honderd duysent guldens, te betaelen in vyff jaeren, daervan de eerste twee hondert duysent guldens sullen werden gefurneert, soo haeft den eersten termyn by de participanten sal wesen opgebracht, welversstaende day wy mette helft vande voorst thien honderd duysent guldens sullen genieten ende dragen winste ende risico, gelyck alle andere participanten in dese compaignie genieten ende draegen sullen.'
11. Erik Odegard, *Colonial Careers. Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, Rijckloff Volckertsz. Van Goens and Career-Making in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Empire* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2018), especially Chapter 1, pp. 31–60; Joris van den Tol, *Lobbying in Company: Mechanisms of Political Decision-Making and Economic Interests in the History of Dutch Brazil, 1621–1656* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2018), especially Chapter 1, pp. 25–56; Cádia Antunes, Erik Odegard, and Joris van den Tol, 'Dutch Brazil: Networks and Entanglements of a Colonial Dream,' in *Exploring the Dutch Empire: Agents, Networks and Institutions, 1600–2000*, ed. Catia Antunes and Jos Gommans (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 77–94.
12. Gaastra, *De Geschiedenis van de VOC*; Den Heijer, *De Geschiedenis van de WIC*.
13. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 11: 'Alle welke poincten, voordeelen, ende vryheden, hier boven verhaalt, Wy geordonneert hebben (...).' NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 1–2: '(...) ende daertoe te voorsien met behoorlyck octroy, ende met de privilegien ende exemptiën hiernae volgende (...).'
14. Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, 'Introduction,' in *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–18; António Manuel Hespanha, 'A constituição do império,' in *O Antigo Regime nos trópicos. A dinâmica imperial portuguesa (séculos XVI–XVIII)*, ed. João Fragoso, Maria Fernanda Bicalho, and Maria de Fátima Gouveia (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001), 65–67; and C.H. Alexandrowicz, 'Freitas vs Grotius,' in *Theories of Empire, 1450–1800*, ed. David Armitage (Farnham: Ashgate, 1998), 239–260.

15. Roland Mousnier, *Les institutions de la France sous la monarchie absolue*, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1980).
16. Regina Grafe and Alejandra Irigoin, 'A Stakeholder Empire: The Political Economy of Spanish Imperial Rule in America,' *The Economic History Review* 65, no. 2 (2012): 609–651.
17. Marjolein 't Hart, *The Making of a Bourgeois State: War, Politics and Finance During the Dutch Revolt* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).
18. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 10: 'Dar die vande respective Cameren sullen vermogen hare Specerien te overslaen het sy binne Scheepsboot oft in die pachuysen ende dat sonder daervan eenigen Axcys Impost ofte waeghelt te betalen (...).' NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 8, articles X and XXXV.
19. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 9–10: 'Dat die Specerien Chinesche syde ende Cattoene Linwaten die by dese Compaaignie uuyt Oost Indien sullen worden begracht int Innecommen nochte uuytgaen niet meer en sullen wordden belast als die nu belast syn volgende de Lyste ende de generale verclaringe nopende de goederen inde selve niet gespecificert int eynde van dien gestelt.'
20. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 6: 'Als d' een ofte d' ander Camer Specerien ofte andere Coopmanschappen van Indien aengecregeen heeft ende andere Cameren egheen en hebben ofte noch egheene en hebben Ingecregen dat in sulcken gevalle die Camere de geprovideert is die andere Cameren op haer versoeck naer gelegentheyt vande zake sal provideren ende tgoet seyndenende elckemaal meer seynden als sy wederomme uuytvercocht sullen hebben.' NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 7, article XXVI.
21. Ekama, *Courting Conflict*, p. 76. For the voicing of notions of common good and general participation of previously engaged entrepreneurs in overseas trade, see NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 2–3. NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 2.
22. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 9: 'Oft gebeurde dat de Schepen van Spaignen Portugal ofte andere vyanden dis Schepen van dese Compaaignie vyantlycken aentasten ende int vechten eenige der vyanden Schepen verovert werdden dat die selve veroverde Schepen ende goederen sullen verdeelt werdden near die ordre vanden Lande te weeten het Landt ende den Admirael genietende daervan hunne gerichticheyt Mits dat vooren affgetrocken sal wordden de schade die de Compaaignie in den selven rencontre geleden sal hebben Ende sullen die vande respective Admiralteyen daer die Schepen sullen aencommen die kennisse nemen vande deuchdelycheyt vande prinse Blyvende pendent Lite die administratie vande goederen by die vande Compaaignie onder

- behoorlycken Inventaris soo vooren geseyt is ende den gegraveerden by Sententie vry behoudende aen ons te provoceren.' NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 10–11, articles XLIII and XLIV.
23. Ekama, *Courting Conflict*.
 24. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 8: 'Item dat die vande voorschreven Compaignie sullen vermogen beoosten de Cape van bonne Esperance Mitsgaders in ende deur de enghte van Magellanes mette Princen ende potentaten verbintinnen ende Contracten te maken opten name vande Staten generael der Vereenichde Nederlanden ofte hooge Overicheyt.' NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 3, 1 and 2. Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, Pedro Cardim and Mafalda Soares da Cunha (eds.), *Optima Pars. Elites Ibero-Americanas do Antigo Regime* (Lisbon: Imprensa de ciências sociais, 2005).
 25. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 8–9: '(...) aldaer eenige forteressen ende versekerteden te bouwen Gouverneurs volck van oorloge ende Officiers van Justitien ende tot andere nootelycke diensten tot consernatie vande plaatssen onderhoudinge van geode orders politie en Justitie (...).' NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 2, article II.
 26. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 9: '(...) dat de voorschreven Gouverneurs Officiers van Justitie ende volck van oorloge sullen eedt van getrouwicheyt doen aende Staten general ofte hooge Overicheyt voorschreven en aende Compaignie (...).' NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 2, article II and III.
 27. Odegard, *Colonial Careers*, especially Chapter 4.
 28. Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005).
 29. NL-HaNA, VOC, 1.04.02, inv. nr. 1, folio 11: 'Alle welke poincten voordeelen, ende vryheden, hierboven verhaalt, Wy geordonneert hebben, ende ordonneren mitsdezen dat agtervolgt ende onderhouden zullen worden by allen ende eenen iegelyken van de onderzaten ende ingezetenen der vereenidge Landen(...).' NL-HaNA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 13, fol. 1: '(...) dat de schipvaert, handelinge, ende commer-cien inde quartieren van westindien ende Africa, ende anderen hiernae gedesigneert, voortaan nyet anders en sal warden gedreven, dan met gemeene vereenichde macht vande coopluyden, ende ingesetenen deser landen, ende dat tot dien eynde opgerecht sal warden eene generaelle compagnie (...).'
 30. Cátia Antunes, Susana Münch Miranda, and João Paulo Salvado, 'The Resources of Others: Dutch Exploitation of European Expansion and Empires, 1570–1800,' *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 131, no. 3 (2018):

- 501–522; Cátia Brilli, ‘Coping with Iberian Monopolies: Genoese Trade Networks and Formal Institutions in Spain and in Portugal During the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century,’ *European Revue of History/Revue Européenne d’Histoire* 23, no. 3 (2016): 456–485; and Cátia Antunes, João Paulo Salvado, and Rob Post, ‘Het omzeilen van monopolichselandel: smokkel en belastingontduiking bij de handel in bazielhout, 1500–1674,’ *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 13, no. 1 (2016): 23–52.
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 32. Julie Svalastog, *Mastering the Worst of Trades: England’s Early Africa Companies and Their Traders, 1618–1672* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2018); Alejandro García Montón, *Génova y el Atlántico (c. 1650–1680). Emprendedores mediterráneos frente al auge del capitalismo del Norte* (unpublished PhD dissertation, European University Institute, 2014).
 33. Herbert Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Williamsport: Bayard Press, 1937), 118.
 34. Bloom, *The Economic Activities of the Jews of Amsterdam*, 126.
 35. Peter Mark and José da Silva Horta, *The Forgotten Diaspora: Jewish Communities in West Africa and the Making of the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Cátia Antunes and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, ‘Les négociants d’Amsterdam, le commerce ouest-Africain et la traite négrière, 1580–1674,’ in *Africains et Européens dans le monde atlantique, XVe-XIXe siècle*, ed. Guy Saupin (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 373–400.

36. Cátia Antunes and Jessica Roitman, ‘A War of Words: Sephardi Merchants, (Inter)national Incidents, and Litigation in the Dutch Republic, 1580–1640,’ *Jewish Culture and History* 13 (2015): 1–23.
37. Cátia Antunes, ‘Keeping Up Appearances: Using and Abusing Identities in the Low Countries: The Portuguese Nation of Amsterdam, 1580–1654,’ *Revue du Nord* 30 (2014): 179–190; Cátia Antunes, ‘Prosecuting the Persecutor: Contracts, Sugar, Jews and Inquisitors, 1580–1640,’ *Mediaevalia* 32 (2011): 221–238.



CHAPTER 3

Empire of Riches: Visions of Dutch Commercial Imperialism, c. 1600–1750

Arthur Weststeijn

If there was anything exceptional about the early-modern Dutch empire, it was that the Dutch, unlike any other global power in the early-modern world, lived in a Republic. All European competitors who contended with the Dutch worldwide throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, be they Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, Danish or Swedish, were subjects of monarchical states. Single rulers also governed all non-European imperial powers, from the Ottoman sultanate to the Tokugawa shogunate and from the Mughal empire to the Ashanti empire. This monarchical dominance forms a clear contrast with Dutch imperialism, which took wing on the very moment the Dutch Republic came into being in the late sixteenth century as a confederate, kingless state. Indeed, the subsequent development of Dutch colonial rule in the first half of the seventeenth century was essentially justified as an anti-imperial project to undermine claims for Habsburg universal monarchy. Dutch colonial expansion, its propagandists argued, protected liberty against tyranny worldwide.¹

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In actual colonial practice, the ‘republican’ dimension of the Dutch empire made little difference, for Dutch imperialism clearly shared many characteristics with other imperial states—not least, as Catia Antunes has shown, with the Spanish and Portuguese empires.² Yet on the more abstract level of intellectual history, Dutch imperial self-justification in terms of a global competition between liberty and tyranny has more significance, for it reveals the conceptual opposition between republicanism, commonly defined as a language of liberty in the sense of non-domination, and imperialism as a language of domination.³ Indeed, the Dutch Republic, despite being one of Europe’s most expansionist and belligerent policies, never in its history called itself an empire. Unlike the conceptual and ideological construction of, for example, the ‘British Empire’ over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was no intellectual development of a clear-cut ‘Dutch empire’.⁴

How to account for this absence of imperial self-awareness in early-modern Dutch history? This chapter argues that the tension between republican liberty and imperial domination resulted in a particular commercial interpretation of empire that was developed from the very onset of Dutch imperialism around 1600 onwards.⁵ In this process, the actual practice of Dutch colonial rule overseas, based on conquest, occupation and regal display, was mitigated through metropolitan representations that proclaimed its beneficial nature as a ‘republican empire’ of worldwide commercial cooperation and prosperity.⁶ The ideological construction of this ‘empire of riches’, I argue, can be considered a counternarrative to the ‘embarrassment of riches’ that Simon Schama famously characterized as a foundational aspect of Dutch culture.⁷ For Dutch imperial advocates in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, worldly riches were not just a reason for embarrassment but rather for self-confidence: global trade was considered to be the foundational principle of a republican empire that merged commercial self-interest with the *res publica*, the common good of the commonwealth and, by extension, of humanity.

To explore the development of this republican-imperial narrative, I focus on a number of case studies of moral and cultural framing of empire within early-modern Dutch society, building upon insights on the significance of humanist high culture in the early-modern Spanish and British empires,⁸ and on scholarship regarding the imperial dimension of nineteenth- and twentieth-century metropolitan cultures.⁹ This focus on the metropolitan context of the Dutch empire does not imply

a strictly ‘national’ approach, for local as well as international contexts and actors interacted in the creation of early-modern Dutch visions of empire. Indeed, the analysis of these visions reveals how a national conception of ‘Dutch empire’ did not materialize because of the persistent notion of a purely commercial enterprise based upon urban and corporate personifications of empire. This imperial self-presentation in terms of a Company-Republic may have been typical for the Dutch context, but this does not warrant the conclusion that the Dutch republican framing of commercial empire was altogether exceptional. A comparable emphasis on commerce pervaded seventeenth- and eighteenth-century visions of empire in Britain,¹⁰ while the republican empire of the United States of America has also tried to solve the tension between liberty and domination by ‘hiding’ its imperial nature.¹¹ The Dutch case is relevant precisely because it shows how an alternative idea of empire in terms of global commercial exchange for the sake of profit developed and why this idea remains in vogue in a postcolonial world.

CICERONIAN ETHICS AND THE INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS OF DUTCH COMMERCIAL IMPERIALISM

In the summer of 1601, Sa’id al-Din, the sultan of Ternate in the Moluccas, received a remarkable letter from the other side of the globe. The parchment letter was written in elegant Arabic, but the signature and red lacquer seal attached to it revealed it came from an unlikely source: Maurice, Prince of Orange, the military leader of the Dutch Republic. A small Dutch delegation had recently arrived at Ternate and delivered the letter to the sultan with the following request:

Since we have considered that it is not only honourable, but also expedient for our Republic that we not only maintain love and peace with our neighbours, but also establish friendship and conclude treaties to the extent of our abilities with foreign nations and distant peoples, and [having considered] that the people of our lands, driven by natural inclination, are desirous to travel abroad and see far-flung countries, we have seen fit to facilitate their endeavour and fulfil their ardent desire and to grant them an opportunity by concluding and confirming a mutual covenant and treaty with the inhabitants of those parts.¹²

For Sa’id al-Din, this was an offer he could not refuse. The sultan regarded the Dutch as useful allies in the ongoing competition with

the neighbouring island of Tidore, which was controlled by their common enemy, the Portuguese. Having read the Arabic letter, he therefore granted the Dutch permission to launch an attack against the Portuguese fortress on Tidore.

At first sight, this particular diplomatic episode was not exceptional, and it also had no significant consequences on the ground (the attack against the fortress on Tidore failed miserably). In the years around 1600, there were numerous comparable cases of collaboration between local sovereigns in Southeast Asia and Dutch interlopers who tried to outplay the Portuguese overseas.¹³ Indeed, two years before, sultan Sa'íd al-Din had sent a royal letter of his own to the Prince of Orange, together with a gift of cloves to show his willingness to cooperate.¹⁴ This particular instance of global diplomacy between rulers in Southeast Asia and the Dutch Republic was therefore not surprising. More significant is the specific wording of the Arabic letter, which exemplifies how the Dutch thought of themselves and presented themselves on this global diplomatic stage. At its very inception, Dutch colonialism appropriated the venerable language of Ciceronian ethics to legitimize its republican imperial endeavour.

The crucial passage of the Arabic letter concerns the phrase ‘not only honourable, but also expedient’. This may seem a fairly general statement of little significance, but it gains weight considering that the author of the letter was the French scholar Joseph Justus Scaliger, professor at Leiden University and arguably the most prominent humanist in Europe around 1600.¹⁵ Scaliger had been requested to make the Arabic text on behalf of the Old East India Company (*Oude Compagnie*), one of the first Dutch companies for colonial trade. The letter, signed and sealed by the Prince of Orange, was evidently meant to gain the confidence of sovereign rulers in Southeast Asia and to show the good intentions of the naval expedition organized by the Company. To address its intended audience, the Company made a Portuguese as well as an Arabic version of the letter, since Portuguese and Arabic were used regularly in international communication in Southeast Asia. There was only one man in the Dutch Republic up to the task of making the Arabic text, and that man was Scaliger.

True to his nature and fame as a humanist scholar deeply steeped into the classical tradition, Scaliger clearly regarded the task as an opportunity to put Europe's classical vocabulary into a time-honoured, exotic language (Scaliger was a self-taught Arabist and had never met a native

speaker of Arabic). To accomplish his aims, he had at his disposal an earlier Arabic patent letter made for the first Dutch voyage to the East Indies in 1595,¹⁶ as well as his own handwritten Arabic-Latin lexicon. This lexicon provides the clue for Scaliger's understanding of the Dutch colonial expedition, which set sail some four weeks after he finished the letter on 1 June 1600. The lexicon shows that the Arabic phrasing Scaliger used for 'honourable' (*hasan*) and 'expedient' (*nafi'*) is based on his Arabic translations of two key Latin terms: *honestum* and *utile*.¹⁷

Given Scaliger's humanist credentials, the source of the coupling of these two terms is obvious: it derives from Cicero's *De officiis*, the dominant classical handbook on ethics in European humanism. Discussing the potential conflict between morality and utility, Cicero famously claimed the two are inseparable: that which is morally right, or honourable (*honestum*), is also expedient (*utile*), and vice versa.¹⁸ In the light of this classical framework, Scaliger's prominent coupling of honourable and expedient at the very start of the Arabic letter therefore has a significant connotation: it is meant to present Dutch interloping in Southeast Asia as a token of Ciceronian ethics.

The significance of Scaliger's statement is further corroborated by the frequency with which the same terms were used in humanist circles and discussions about colonial trade in the Dutch Republic around 1600. A crucial role in this regard was played by Dirck Coornhert, a towering figure in early Dutch humanism who had translated Cicero's *De officiis* into Dutch in 1561.¹⁹ In his moralistic dialogue *The Merchant* (*De coopman*) from 1580, Coornhert argued that a honourable merchant engages in expedient trade.²⁰ Once Dutch colonial trade took off towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Ciceronian language that Coornhert had made popular gained momentum. From 1594 onwards, many different companies for overseas trade were established; when the States of Holland advised in 1601 to merge them together, they argued this united company 'would not only be honourable and expedient but necessary for the conservation of trade'.²¹ To maintain internal concord and to outdo external competition (embodied in 1600 by the foundation of the English East India Company), it was deemed necessary to bring a variety of commercial interests together under a single organization which, consisting of different chambers in different cities, mirrored the confederal political structure of the Dutch Republic.²²

The subsequent establishment in 1602 of the United East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, or VOC) followed this

logic. In the process, the dominant figure in the creation of the VOC, the statesman Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, added a significant third term to the Ciceronian equation. Explaining the reasons why the VOC should be granted an exclusive charter by the Dutch States General, he claimed that this would be ‘honourable, expedient and profitable’.²³ Van Oldenbarnevelt thus tried to explicate Cicero’s ambiguous language for a commerce-minded audience, merging the classical vocabulary of *honestum* and *utile* with a modern emphasis on straightforward profit. The strategy worked, and this tripartite explanation of Ciceronian ethics ended up prominently in the preamble of the official charter granted to the VOC in 1602:

It would not only be honourable, expedient and profitable for the United Provinces, but also for all who had commenced and participated in this commendable trade, if the Company is united and commerce is shared, managed and expanded under a fixed and secure unity, order and governance, for all the residents of the United Provinces who would like to participate in it.²⁴

The VOC charter thus connected the self-interest of a private company to the common interest of the nascent Dutch Republic.

The prominence of the Ciceronian theme in the intellectual origins of Dutch commercial imperialism is made manifest in the work of Hugo Grotius, Scaliger’s star student at Leiden, close collaborator of Van Oldenbarnevelt and legal adviser to the recently founded VOC. In his manuscript treatise *De jure praedae*, commissioned by the VOC to justify the seizure of a Portuguese vessel in the Strait of Singapore, Grotius argued with intricate humanist reasoning that the Dutch act of piracy had been *honestum* as well as *utile*.²⁵ Moreover, Grotius followed Scaliger’s lead in presenting Dutch colonial trade as the embodiment of global commercial cooperation. While Scaliger’s Arabic letter from 1600 manifestly employed terms such as love, peace, friendship and treaty to present Dutch interloping in Southeast Asia as a benign enterprise based on mutual collaboration, Grotius continued with the claim that colonial trade fulfilled the purpose of interhuman interaction: ‘A natural bent (so to speak) for maritime enterprise characterizes our people, who regard it as the most agreeable of all occupations to aid humanity, while finding a ready means of self-support, through an international exchange of benefits from which no one suffers loss’.²⁶ In this way, Grotius combined

the construction of a republican Dutch identity based on maritime commerce with the ideal of a global exchange of commodities sanctioned by natural law. Dutch self-interest (which, for Grotius, primarily entailed the interest of the province of Holland) was ideologically coupled to the general interest of humanity at large.

The dominance of humanist reasoning around 1600 meant that the construction of this commercial republican identity was firmly based upon a classical model: that of the Batavians, the ancient tribe that allegedly had remained independent from the Roman Empire. Originally, this ‘Batavian myth’ had clear anti-imperial overtones, being employed not only as a token of an intrinsic Dutch freedom from domination (in its Roman and Habsburg guises), but also as a token of agrarian simplicity, unstained by commercial expansion and the resulting wealth.²⁷ Grotius, however, gave an important twist to this traditional view by presenting the Dutch as a seafaring people who explored the outer confines of the globe to seek for ‘honourable profit’. This commercial ambition, Grotius argued, was the opposite of territorial imperialism. With a curious linguistic explanation that typified his humanist approach, Grotius stated that it could not be a coincidence that the Dutch term for *imperium*, ‘rijk’, is also the Dutch word for ‘rich’.²⁸ In other words, the nascent Dutch empire should not be interpreted as a standard expansionist empire, but as something different: an empire of riches.

EMPIRE ABROAD VS. EMPIRE AT HOME: BATAVIA, AMSTERDAM AND THE IMPERIAL METROPOLIS

In 1619, the humanist interpretation of empire that permeated Dutch culture at the start of the seventeenth century was materialized in concrete colonial practice with the creation of Batavia, the centre of the Dutch empire in Asia. The new city, raised upon the ruins of Jayakarta, was baptized on the explicit instigation of the governing board of the VOC as a physical incarnation of the Batavian myth. This manoeuvre however could not conceal the deep rift between the intellectual construction of empire and its actual manifestation on the ground. Clearly, the alleged opposition between a territorial empire based on warfare and conquest and a commercial empire based on peace and trade did not correspond to colonial reality. The VOC frequently engaged in open warfare, not only against its European competitors but also against

erstwhile allies in Southeast Asia, the genocide on the Banda Islands in 1621 being the most striking example. Indeed, the perpetrator of this genocide, VOC governor-general Jan Pieterszoon Coen, effectively collapsed the distinction between bellicose and commercial imperialism with his famous dictum: ‘Trade without war or war without trade cannot be maintained’.²⁹

Tellingly, the Amsterdam chamber reacted to Coen’s aggressive policies in Southeast Asia with the claim that from their commercial point of view, honourable behaviour does not consist in ‘exercising violence and injustice’ but in ‘making profit’—an insight, they stated, ‘princes and potentates’ did not understand.³⁰ Profitability was thus considered as the essence of a republican, non-monarchical morality. In the traditional Ciceronian balance between *honestum* and *utile*, the emphasis had been shifted towards expedience in sheer commercial terms of profitability. A comparable development of a commercial ideology of colonization took place in contemporary England, although the conceptual prominence of ‘profit’ in the Dutch context slightly differed from English discussions in terms of ‘greatness’. While English colonial writers and actors such as Robert Johnson primarily discussed commercial wealth in the context of the formation of (monarchical) state power, Dutch visions focused upon the mercantile interests of the VOC as a corporate organization intertwined with the confederal Dutch body politic, a Company-Republic.³¹ The resulting embrace of profit could also be legitimized religiously, for example in the work of the businessman-pamphleteer Willem Usselincx or the Calvinist cleric Godefridus Udemans, who argued that commercial expansion should not be seen as an end in itself but rather as a means to spread the Protestant faith over the globe: profit then counted as the proof of missionary zeal.³² ‘Gain and godliness’, in the felicitous phrasing of Charles Boxer, thus came together in Dutch visions of commercial empire.³³

Dutch colonial practice overseas, however, followed a trajectory that contrasted with the republican and commercial self-image constructed in the metropolis. As Scaliger’s Arabic letter already made clear, the opening moves of Dutch colonial expansion in Asia merged a republican with a monarchical self-presentation, especially centred upon the Prince of Orange as alleged sovereign ruler. To enhance their standing and diplomatic leverage, Dutch delegations in Asia claimed they represented a (non-existing) ‘king of Holland’. Seeking to impress Asian sovereigns, they tried to make clear they served a powerful military sovereign, for

example in 1602 when they gave the Sinhalese king Vimaladharmasuriya a portrait of Prince Maurice on horseback on the battlefield.³⁴ This regal self-presentation further increased after the foundation of Batavia, which strengthened the sovereign claims of the VOC itself and especially of its governor-general. The building of a large fortress at Batavia, which housed the residence of the governor-general and the governmental offices of the Council of the Indies, clearly meant to enhance the imperial posture of the VOC and its officials. As eighteenth-century observers noted, the governor-general was ‘provided with no less Pomp and State than the Princes of Europe’, becoming known as ‘the Raya de Jaccatra of the Hollanders, that is the King of Jaccatra’. Rulers throughout the Indian Ocean basin, from Abyssinia to Tonkin, addressed their diplomatic correspondence to the ‘king of Batavia’.³⁵

The clear-cut imperial nature of Dutch colonialism became manifest as well in the Atlantic. After the creation of the West India Company (WIC) in 1621, a ‘grand design’ of open warfare and territorial conquest was developed to deal a decisive blow against the Habsburg empire in the Americas.³⁶ The occupation of Northeastern Brazil from 1630 onwards in particular revealed the imperial features of Dutch colonialism, not least because Dutch military exploits received intense coverage in contemporary news media.³⁷ The presence on Brazilian ground of a scion of the House of Orange, Johan Maurits van Nassau Siegen, and his princely court at Recife between 1636 and 1644, further intensified the regal character of Dutch colonial rule in the Atlantic.

While the Dutch empire thus turned increasingly imperial in the colonial arena, its self-presentation ‘at home’ continued the creed of commerce and collaboration that had been created around 1600. The lasting dominance of this humanist perspective is especially clear in Amsterdam. The city’s dominant role in Dutch colonial expansion was first celebrated shortly after the establishment of the VOC, when the burgomasters of the city commissioned a celebratory decoration of Amsterdam as Ruler of the World (Image 3.1). The image, painted in 1606 upon the lid of a harpsichord played at formal events, portrays Amsterdam in a classical Roman pose as empress of the globe, overlooking the continents, ‘places on earth of which even the Ancients had no knowledge’, as the accompanying text proudly proclaims.³⁸ This self-confidence, a typical gesture of humanist rivalry with the classics that was also manifest in the contemporary works of Grotius, grew even more obvious in later decades, until being immortalized in the very heart of the city. In the imperial



Image 3.1 Pieter Isaacsz, *Amsterdam as the Centre of World Trade*. Harpsichord Lid showing an Allegory of Amsterdam as the Center of World Trade, c. 1604–1607. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

imagination that Amsterdam projected upon itself and the world, the narrative of a benign commercial empire took centre stage.³⁹

A crucial moment in the development of this narrative was the visit of Maria de' Medici to the Dutch Republic in 1638. To celebrate its own importance, Amsterdam welcomed the French Queen Mother with a ceremonial royal entry that highlighted the city's central role in global trade. Under the guidance of P.C. Hooft and Caspar Barlaeus, two of the leading humanist authors of the day, an elaborate iconographical programme was designed with large displays and festivities.⁴⁰ The overall theme of the program became manifest upon the queen's entrance to the city at Dam Square, where a monumental triumphal arch was erected, crowned with a large cog, the ship of Amsterdam's coat of arms. As Barlaeus explained in the text he wrote for the occasion, the ship symbolized Dutch global trade 'through which we enjoy the profit and pleasure of faraway countries'.⁴¹

To expound this message of imperial prosperity, the procession continued to the Oudezijds Voorburgwal, where another triumphal arch allegorically revealed Maria de' Medici's entrance on a triumphal carriage pulled by four lions. Guised as Berecynthia, the Roman Cybele that in the Augustan tradition was considered the protecting Magna Mater of empire, she is received by the personification of Amsterdam, seconded

by four figures that represent the four continents. Significantly, the scene is crowned with the phrase *Laeta deum partu* ('Happy in a progeny of gods'), taken from a passage in Virgil's *Aeneid* that celebrates the global destiny of the Roman Empire.⁴² For all its humanist studiousness, the message of the arch is clear: Maria de' Medici honours with her divine presence the imperial metropolis of Amsterdam—the new Rome.

But Amsterdam was a particular incarnation of Rome, the heart of an empire not built by legionnaires, but by trade. Passing through the arch, Maria de' Medici reached the *Oost-Indisch Huis*, the headquarters of the Amsterdam chamber of the VOC, where she received a warm welcome in the boardroom, decorated with paintings of Dutch colonial outposts in Asia and exhibitions of weapons, silk, spices and other trading goods from the Dutch empire. A sumptuous banquet completed the scene, with dishes and ingredients from all over the world—meant to give Maria de' Medici the impression ‘she was the guest of Indians, Moluccans, Persians, Arabs, Japanese and Chinese’. Amsterdam was thus turned into a global village, the centre of a multicultural world allegedly created by cooperative commerce. Barlaeus did admit that the VOC, apart from being a commercial company, had evolved into a warlike sovereign, ‘performing and acting in ways that do not differ much from those of great Rulers’.⁴³ For Barlaeus, the Company and the Republic basically coalesced. When Maria de' Medici visited the WIC headquarters on the other side of town, he stated that the VOC and WIC together formed a strong foundation for the Dutch Republic ‘to spread its empire wherever the Sun is shining’.⁴⁴

This grandiloquent expression of imperial self-esteem, hailing the Dutch empire as a new Rome where the sun never sets, arguably formed the culmination of humanist imperialism in the Dutch Republic—indeed, the single most manifest expression of empire (Barlaeus uses the term *imperium*) in the seventeenth century. It was also widely disseminated, for Barlaeus’ celebratory text, printed in a lofty Latin edition, was subsequently translated into Dutch and French. Moreover, Barlaeus continued his imperialist fervour a decade later in his famous treatise on Johan Maurits van Nassau Siegen in Brazil.⁴⁵ Yet Barlaeus’ outspoken imperializing tone continued to highlight the commercial nature of the Dutch empire, allegedly not based on territorial conquests but on the insatiable lust for profit. After the loss of Brazil in 1654 and the stagnation of VOC expansion in Asia, this core element of the Dutch imperial narrative was intensified in the further monumentalization of Amsterdam as a commercial imperial metropolis.

By far the most prominent illustration of this process is the Amsterdam Town Hall, inaugurated in 1655. The design and decorative scheme of this magnificent building merges different iconographical and allegorical references to Biblical and Roman antiquity under the general claim that Amsterdam should be considered the centre of the world, if not the universe.⁴⁶ Most prominently, the two façades on either side of the classical building give a remarkable synopsis of the Dutch imperial self-image, carved into stone and visible to all. The façade at Dam Square is crowned by a bronze statue of Peace, under which a pediment shows Amsterdam ruling the seas. The pediment on the other side contains a personification of Trade resting on the globe while the four continents pay tribute. Inside of the building, on the floor of the central hall, two large marble maps reveal the Western and Eastern hemisphere and the latest Dutch naval campaigns at the end of the world.⁴⁷ In the Town Hall, Amsterdam's citizens thus literally trod the globe.

The same self-confident message of global domination, trade and prosperity spread throughout the city in the years around 1660. On their way from Dam Square towards the VOC headquarters, citizens and visitors first encountered the stock exchange, the financial heart of the Republic, and then the new building of the Amsterdam Admiralty, the organization for maritime control that played an important role in Dutch imperial policy. Its classical façade from 1662, clearly inspired by the Town Hall, was crowned with a pediment that shows the Dutch lion protecting Holland, flanked by Lady Justice, the god Mars and the sea god Neptune. In the same year, the boardroom in the VOC headquarters around the corner was embellished with a new series of paintings portraying important places for Dutch colonial trade in Asia, including Canton in China and Ayuthaya in Thailand, where the VOC held trading privileges, Cochin and Cananor, two recently conquered cities in India, and Banda Neira in the Moluccas, the location of Coen's notorious genocide from 1621 (now being portrayed as a well-ordered and serene colonial outpost).⁴⁸ The most prominent painting, placed above the boardroom's chimney, depicted the centre of the Dutch empire in Asia: Batavia. Significantly, the artist, Andries Beeckman, took a viewpoint outside of Batavia's fortress, capturing an apparently peaceful urban scene in which the different cultures of the colonial city happily mingle and exchange goods. The setting of a cheerful and prosperous colonial order of intercultural cooperation, set against the backdrop of an imposing fortress and exotic palm trees, perfectly fitted the imperial illusions of the VOC board.⁴⁹

Amsterdam's imperial self-representation concluded in the city's harbour with the construction of two colossal classical buildings, both designed by the city's chief architect Daniel Stalpaert.⁵⁰ The first building, placed at a strategic location overlooking the harbour in 1655, served as the Admiralty's maritime arsenal; the second, an enormous construction from 1665, contained the *Oost-Indisch Magazijn*, the warehouses of the VOC.⁵¹ Erected in a monumental and imposing style meant to imitate Roman antiquity, these two buildings made a decisive impact on Amsterdam's urban outlook. Indeed, when another scion of the Medici family, Cosimo III of Tuscany, visited Amsterdam in 1668, the very first buildings he visited were those belonging to the VOC and the Admiralty.⁵² Some seventy years after the onset of Dutch colonial expansion, Amsterdam had been turned into an imperial metropolis that could not only easily compete with Renaissance Florence but also with the colonial capitals of Paris, London, Madrid and Lisbon. But unlike the Louvre, Whitehall, the Buen Retiro or the Paço da Ribeira, the palaces that represented Amsterdam's imperial might were not connected to a ruling monarchy proud of its victories on the battlefield, but to a republican elite that celebrated the exploits of global commercial enterprise.⁵³

EMPIRE IS A LADY: CELEBRATING THE COMPANY-REPUBLIC

In 1702, on the occasion of the VOC centenary, Amsterdam's imperial self-image was aptly epitomized in a classicist painting made by Nicolaas Verkolje for the Amsterdam Chamber of the VOC (Image 3.2).⁵⁴ It shows a female representation of the Company, dressed in full armour and seated on the throne of empire, flanked by representations of navigation and trade. While two putti empty a cornucopia of Asian spices, a ship sets sail beyond the Pillars of Hercules, aiming for the Orient. The painting revisited many of the iconographical elements that had become staple images of Dutch imperialism in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, from the 1606 harpsichord to the Town Hall façade. In this tradition, the classical depiction of empire as an enthroned woman was given a decisive commercial and maritime twist with the claim that the Dutch had gone beyond the limits of the ancient world to trade in exotic spices.

At this moment, by the start of the eighteenth century, Dutch power in the Americas had subsided while the VOC in Asia essentially sought to consolidate its sovereign control over key areas and to develop existing trading networks without further territorial expansion. As a result, as



Image 3.2 Nicolaas Verkolje, *Apotheosis of the Dutch East India Company*. Allegory of the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce of the VOC, c. 1702. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Benjamin Schmidt argues, Dutch publications of the period increasingly emphasized the continental European perspective of empire, gradually eliding the Dutch role as a colonial actor.⁵⁵ The very notion of a ‘Dutch empire’, which had only briefly surfaced in the work of Barlaeus around 1640, was never developed into a straightforward ideological concept. Nonetheless, the humanist idea of a specifically commercial empire, created around 1600, continued to dominate the representation of Dutch imperial power throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, an honorary medal struck on the occasion of the VOC centenary, again showing a female imperial figure and a ship that sails beyond the Pillars of Hercules, is framed with the message *In altera saecula pergo*, ‘I go on in another century’.⁵⁶ This self-assured expression of continuing VOC power eventually evolved into a widespread iconographical celebration of the Dutch Company-Republic as a successful commercial empire, publicized to national and international audiences at the height of the Enlightenment.

One of the leading figures in the development of this iconographical celebration was Bernard Picart, the French engraver and protestant convert who made a successful career in Amsterdam. Apart from his ground-breaking engravings on global religious diversity for the multi-volume *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, Picart also provided elaborate illustrations for a series of works on Dutch and general history.⁵⁷ First, in 1722, he made the noteworthy frontispiece to *Histoire des Provinces-Unies des Pays-Bas*, one of the final works of Jean Le Clerc, the controversial Swiss theologian who had also migrated to Amsterdam where he became a leading Enlightenment scholar. This treatise on the history of the Dutch Republic, published in three volumes in Amsterdam between 1723 and 1728, opens with Picart's full-page allegory which is clearly indebted to the traditional representations of the Dutch commercial empire: a seated woman, protected by a lion and flanked by personifications of Religion, Liberty, Peace, Navigation, Trade, Fortune and Abundance, receives the treasures from America, Africa and Asia, against the background of a sailing fleet (Image 3.3).⁵⁸ For Picart, the Dutch Republic could be epitomized as a global commercial power whose reign was based on freedom and international exchange.

A couple of years later, Picart further elaborated this theme with an illustration for a massive Dutch treatise on world history, authored by Geerlof Suikers and published posthumously in five volumes between 1721 and 1728 by the leading Amsterdam printing house of the Wetstein family. For the volume dealing with the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, dedicated by the Wetsteins to two Amsterdam burgomasters and Company directors, Picart made an engraving which depicts two female representations of the VOC and WIC. Once again, these figures are accompanied by personifications of Liberty and Trade, together with Lady Justice and a putto holding a Roman fasces, the emblem of *imperium*. With the dominating façade of the Amsterdam Town Hall in the background, different people who represent the non-European world provide an array of exotic goods, including chinaware and a small statue of Buddha. In the dedicatory text that accompanies the engraving, the Wetsteins explained it meant to show the importance of 'the Companies for the expansion of our patriots' trade to where the sun rises and sets'.⁵⁹ The global reach of the VOC and WIC was thus connected to notions of urban patriotism and mercantile pride.



Image 3.3 Bernard Picart, frontispiece to Jean Le Clerc, *Histoire des Provinces Unies des Pays-Bas*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: François L'Honoré and Zacharias Chatelain (II), 1723)

Yet this image of a local-global commercial empire was not only intended for Dutch readers but also for an international audience. In 1730, Picart made a third engraving that combined the elements of his first two representations of the Dutch empire, now as the frontispiece for a French treatise on the political and economic situation of the Dutch Republic. This image shows three female figures together: the Dutch Republic in the middle, flanked by the VOC and WIC. Religion and Trade admire the scene, Neptune resigns ‘the empire of the sea’ to the Republic, and a putto unveils a map of ‘the world where she extends her commerce’.⁶⁰ The Dutch Republic and the two companies for colonial trade are merged into a trinity of maritime commercial imperialism.

Picart’s engravings form the context to arguably the most important depiction of the early-modern Dutch empire: the lavish frontispiece to the multi-volume treatise by François Valentyn, who had served as a Dutch minister in different areas in Southeast Asia before writing an extensive historical, geographical and ethnographical overview of the areas where the VOC was active. The title of Valentyn’s famous work, published between 1724 and 1726, prominently mentions that it gives an analysis of *Nederlands mogentheyd* or ‘Dutch authority’ in the East Indies – the only contemporary treatise to use this explicit conception of Dutch colonial power.⁶¹ This imperial claim is exemplified by the frontispiece, designed by the Amsterdam artist Gerard Melder and engraved by Andries van Buysen (Image 3.4). Clearly modelled after Picart’s allegory of the Dutch Republic from 1722, the frontispiece shows a crowned woman seated on a throne, with the acronym VOC embroidered on her breast. This is Lady VOC, protected by the Dutch lion and with her feet placed upon a cornucopia and a helm, a bundle of arrows, and Mercury’s staff—the insignia of navigation, concord and commerce. The personification of Time unveils the globe, next to the figure of Liberty who holds her symbol, a Phrygian hat, above Lady VOC. The naked truth, waving a palm leaf, pulls away a curtain that reveals an oriental scene, while Fortune blows her trumpet in the skies. Never before was the Dutch empire visualized so powerfully.

Compared to Picart’s allegory from 1722, the crucial change in Valentyn’s frontispiece is that Lady VOC has literally taken the place of the Dutch Republic, as an illustration of the interchangeability of Company and Republic. Following the iconographical tradition of the four continents paying tribute, the Company-Republic is presented as the mistress of the world who becomes rich through global exchange,



Image 3.4 Andries van Buysen after Gerard Melder, frontispiece to François Valentyn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indië*, vervattende een naaukeurige en uitvoerige verhandelinge van Nederlands mogentheyd in die gewesten, vol. 1 (Dordrecht: Johannes van Braam; Amsterdam: Gerard onder de Linden, 1724)

receiving the luxury produce from Africa, Asia and America, while Europe observes the scene in front of a ship. Another element of the frontispiece is also slightly adapted from Picart's 1722 image: the angel of History in the foreground, who writes the letters of a psalm while putti open a cabinet filled with images and artefacts of the Orient. The Biblical verses written by the angel are from Psalm 107:23–24: 'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep'. This Biblical message, which was often used in the early Enlightenment to claim the religious significance of gathering empirical knowledge, clearly referred to Valentyn's own career as a minister who turned into a scholar, combining godly with scientific pursuits. This reference to Valentyn's own persona is embodied by the dark figure on the right, a man in an oriental dress who represents the author himself: the middleman between the empire of the VOC and its immortalization in the book of history.⁶²

The representation of the Dutch empire as a powerful Company-Republic remained en vogue for the next couple of decades, reappearing for example in 1739 as the frontispiece to a work on Dutch history by the prominent historian Jan Wagenaar,⁶³ in 1740 as the frontispiece to a long colonialist poem on Batavia by the Amsterdam merchant and playwright Jan de Marre,⁶⁴ and in the 1750s as an Allegory of the VOC, engraved by the designer Simon Fokke.⁶⁵

The iconographical strength of this portrayal of commercial empire is shown by the fact it was also employed in eighteenth-century depictions of the British Empire. For example, the ceiling of the Upper-Hall at Greenwich Hospital, painted by Sir James Thornhill between 1718 and 1725, shows a grand scene that centres upon Queen Anne, with 'the four continents admiring our Maritime Power'.⁶⁶ In 1778, the Venetian-Greek artist Spiridione Roma continued this theme in his allegorical ceiling piece for the East India House in London, titled *The East Offering its Riches to Britannia*.⁶⁷ In these cases, the central female figure explicitly represents Britain as such, either personified by the monarchy or in the guise of 'Britannia'. Indeed, in the 1730s and 1740s the conception of a 'British Empire' increasingly gained momentum, perhaps best epitomized by the patriotic song 'Rule, Britannia!' from 1740.⁶⁸

In the Dutch Republic, however, this amalgamation between empire and nation-state did not materialize. In the absence of a monarchical figure to represent the unity of nation and empire, the Dutch empire could only be embodied by the figure of the Company-Republic, based upon

corporate and local visions of empire developed over more than a century, especially in the context of the VOC and the city of Amsterdam. Although the actual colonial policies of this Company-Republic differed little from those of other imperial powers, the Dutch narrative of empire remained firmly based upon the notion construed around 1600 of a purely commercial enterprise of profit-seeking for the common good. As a result, the concept of a ‘Dutch empire’ never became a comprehensive ideological construct.

CONCLUSION

The visions of commercial empire that were created and disseminated from 1600 onwards, permeated early-modern Dutch political culture, from the foundational ‘Batavian myth’ to the bookshops of the Enlightenment. In a variety of public media, including written documents such as diplomatic correspondence and the official VOC charter, visual representations such as the paintings in the VOC headquarters and Picart’s frontispieces, and urban architecture such as the triumphal arches for Maria de’ Medici and the Amsterdam Town Hall, the Dutch empire was presented as a benign commercial enterprise based upon global cooperation and prosperity.

Foreign observers and competitors were not easily deluded by this narrative. In 1682, for example, the Court of Committees of the EIC in London warned an embassy from the Javanese sultanate of Banten that the Dutch sought ‘Empire of all those Countries, to the enslaving of many noble & ancient Princes’.⁶⁹ This language of ‘empire’ was not adopted in the Dutch Republic itself. Protagonists in the development of the Dutch imperial self-image such as the humanist scholar Barlaeus or the colonial minister Valentyn occasionally used the terminology of *imperium* and its Dutch equivalent *mogentheyd* to describe and legitimize Dutch colonial rule. However, their phrasing did not imply a connected political system of the metropolis and its colonies (a ‘Dutch empire’), but rather referred to the extent of Dutch power overseas (the *imperium* and authority ‘of the Dutch’). Unlike in Britain, where a comparable narrative of commercial empire eventually evolved into the ideological conception of the ‘British Empire’, Dutch visions of empire remained within the framework established at the very onset of Dutch colonial expansion around 1600: that of a corporate enterprise seeking for profit, morally sanctioned by its conflation of mercantile self-interest with the common good.

Arguably, this narrative of a Company-Republic had become so dominant over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that it largely remained in place also after the demise of the Dutch Republic, the dissolution of the VOC, and the creation of an ‘imperial nation-state’ around 1800.⁷⁰ Still today, popular allusions in the Dutch public sphere to the early-modern colonial past often continue the enduring visions already created around 1600—most strikingly perhaps in the recurrent references to the alleged ‘VOC-mentality’ of commercial enterprise. One reason for this lasting dominance of the idea of an ‘empire of riches’ may be the long-term stability of its public incarnations from the seventeenth century, for example the Amsterdam Town Hall which still towers over Dam Square, the ceremonial centre of the Netherlands. But also less prominent traces of the early-modern imperial narrative remain in place as ties between past and present, such as the Admiralty’s arsenal in Amsterdam harbour which is now the National Maritime Museum, visibly celebrating the country’s colonial history with a large replica of an eighteenth-century East Indiaman, or the boardroom of the VOC headquarters, which has been reconstructed to its design from the 1660s and now serves as a lecture hall for history students of the University of Amsterdam. Recent interventions in the public debate have started to expose this continuous linkage between the colonial past and the postcolonial present, for example addressing the predominantly positive presentation of colonial objects and paintings in the collection of the Rijksmuseum.⁷¹ To understand why such uncritical attitudes to the Dutch empire remain entrenched in contemporary society, a first step is to realize that they go back as far as the origins of the Dutch empire itself.

NOTES

1. Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also for practical implications in colonial practice, Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595–1674* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and for the Dutch in Asia: Martine van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies (1595–1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).
2. See the preceding chapter in this volume.

3. The dominant interpretation of early-modern republicanism is presented in Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
4. On the British case, see David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
5. The persistent claims in recent historiography concerning the ‘exceptional’ nature of Dutch imperialism are discussed in Chapter 5 of this volume by Jennifer Foray.
6. I first explored the concept of a Dutch ‘republican empire’ in Arthur Weststeijn, ‘Republican Empire: Colonialism, Commerce, and Corruption in the Dutch Golden Age,’ *Renaissance Studies* 26 (2012): 491–509.
7. Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987).
8. Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: An Intellectual History of English Colonisation, 1500–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); David A. Lupher, *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003); and Sabine MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time: Rome, the Incas, Spain, and Peru* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).
9. See e.g. Felix Driver and David Gilbert, *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and John M. MacKenzie, ed., *European Empires and the People: Popular Responses to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).
10. Cf. Armitage, *Ideological Origins*; Peter J. Cain and Anthony G. Hopkins, ‘Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I: The Old Colonial System, 1688–1850,’ *Economic History Review* 39, no. 4 (1986): 501–525; Andrew Fitzmaurice, ‘The Commercial Ideology of Colonization in Jacobean England: Robert Johnson, Giovanni Botero, and the Pursuit of Greatness,’ *The William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2007): 791–820.
11. Cf. Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2019).
12. Quoted (translation slightly altered) from Arnoud Vrolijk, ‘Scaliger and the Dutch Expansion in Asia: An Arabic Translation for an Early Voyage to the East Indies (1600),’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 78 (2015): 277–309; translation on 309. The letter is held in the Oriental collections of Leiden University Library, MS Or. 1365(3).

I am very grateful to Arnoud Vrolijk for his help in the interpretation of the text.

13. For further background, see Romain Bertrand, *L'histoire à parts égales: Récits d'une encontre Orient-Occident (XVIe–XVIIe siècle)* (Paris: Seuil, 2011); cf. Arthur Weststeijn, 'Provincializing Grotius: International Law and Empire in a Seventeenth-Century Malay Mirror,' in *International Law and Empire: Historical Explorations*, ed. Martti Koskenniemi, Walter Rech, and Manuel Jiménez Fonseca (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 21–38.
14. The Hague, Koninklijk Huisarchief MS KHA 13XII-B-2. See Vrolijk, 'Scaliger's Arabic Patent,' 288.
15. On Scaliger, see especially the extensive work by Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983–1993).
16. This patent letter was translated and printed by Franciscus Raphelengius, professor of Hebrew at Leiden University until his death in 1597. See Herman de Leeuw, 'The First Dutch-Indonesian Treaty: A Rediscovered Arabic Translation by Franciscus Raphelengius,' *Manuscripts of the Middle East* IV (1989): 115–122.
17. *Thesaurus linguae Arabicae*, Leiden University Library MS Or. 212, fols. 78b and 141b. Cf. also the Portuguese version of the patent which uses the phrasing 'nao somente honesto, mas proveitoso': Hendrik Hoogenberk, *De rechtsvoorschriften voor de vaart op Oost-Indië, 1595–1620* (Utrecht: Kemink, 1940), appendix III, 232–233.
18. Cicero, *De officiis*, III.12–14. For the longstanding impact of Ciceronian ethics on imperial thinking, see Peter N. Miller, *Defining the Common Good: Empire, Religion and Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).
19. *Officia Ciceronis, leerende wat yeghelijck in allen staten behoort te doen, bescreuen int Latijn*, trans. Dirck Coornhert (Haarlem: Jan van Zuren, 1561).
20. Dirck Coornhert, *De Coopman. Aanwysende d'oprechte conste om Christelyck ende met eenen gelycken moede in 't winnen ende verliesen coophandel te dryven*, ed. S. van der Woude (Amsterdam: Corvey, 1969).
21. Resoluties van de Staten van Holland, 15–21 May 1601, quoted in J.K.J. de Jonge, ed., *De opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag in Oost-Indië (1595–1610)*, 13 vols. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1862–1895), vol. 1, 138: 'niet alleen eerlijk en dienstig, maar tot den conservatie van den voorschandel nodig.' On the establishment of the VOC, see Oscar Gelderblom, Abe de Jong, and Joost Jonker, 'The Formative Years of the Modern Corporation: The Dutch East India Company, 1602–1623,' *Journal of Economic History* 74 (2013): 1050–1076.

22. For a comparative analysis of the Dutch and English East India Companies, see Adam Clulow and Tristan Mostert, eds., *The Dutch and English East India Companies: Diplomacy, Trade and Violence in Early Modern Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).
23. Quoted in De Jonge, ed., *Opkomst*, vol. 1, 146: ‘eerlyck, dienstelyck en proffytelyck.’
24. VOC Charter (1602), from: <https://www.vocsite.nl/geschiedenis/octrooi.html>: ‘dat eerlijk, dienstig en profytig, niet alleen voor de vereenigde Landen, maar ook voor allen den genen, die deze loffelyke handeling by de hand genomen hadden, ende daar inne waren participerende, zoude wezen, dat de selve Compagnie vereenigt, ende de voorschreve handeling onder een vaste ende zekere eenigheid, ordre, ende politie, zoude mogen gemeen gehouden, gedreven, ende vermeerdert werden, voor alle de ingezetenen der vereenigde Landen, die daar in zouden believen te participeren.’
25. Hugo Grotius, *De jure praedae commentarius*, ed. H.G. Hamaker (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1868), esp. Chapters XIV and XV. On Grotius’ reading of Cicero, see the expert analysis in Benjamin Straumann, *Roman Law in the State of Nature: The Classical Foundations of Hugo Grotius’ Natural Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). On the concrete colonial background, see Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*; and Peter Borschberg, *Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese and Free Trade in the East Indies* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011).
26. Quoted from Hugo Grotius, *Commentary on the Law of Prize and Booty*, ed. Martine van Ittersum (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), 247–248.
27. Cf. Coen Maas, “Non erubescat Hollandia”: Classical Embarrassment of Riches and the Construction of Local History in Hadrianus Junius’ Batavia,’ in *The Quest for an Appropriate Past in Literature, Art and Architecture*, ed. Karl Enenkel and Koen Ottenhey (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 361–382. On the origins of the Batavian Myth, see Karl Enenkel and Koen Ottenhey, *Oudheid als ambitie. De zoektocht naar een passend verleden, 1400–1700* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2017), 137–166.
28. Hugo Grotius, *Parallelon rerum publicarum. Liber tertius: de moribus ingenioque populorum Atheniensium, Romanorum, Batavorum*, ed. Johan Meerman, 4 vols. (Haarlem, 1801–1803), vol. 3: 9, 59. For further background to Grotius’ argumentation, see Arthur Weststeijn, ‘Commonwealths for Preservation and Increase: Ancient Rome in Venice and the Dutch Republic,’ in *Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination*, ed. Wyger Velema and Arthur Weststeijn (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 62–85.
29. Coen to patria, 27 December 1614, in Jan Pietersz. Coen, *Bescheiden omtrent zijn verblijf in Indië*, ed. H.T. Colenbrander (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1919), vol. 1, 98: ‘den handel sonder d’oorloge, noch d’oorloge sonder den handel nyet gemainteneert connen werden’.

30. Amsterdam Chamber to Coen, 14 April 1622, in Coen, *Bescheiden*, vol. 4, 539: ‘dat ten onsen aensien (als cooplyuden sijnde) die d’ere heeft, die wel ende niemant gewelt oft onrecht doende, ’t proffijt heeft, ’t welck buyten de consideratien van princen ende grote potentaten.’
31. Cf. Fitzmaurice, ‘Commercial Ideology of Colonization,’ and idem, ‘The Dutch Empire in Intellectual History,’ *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 132, no. 2 (2007): 97–109.
32. See Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, 176–183, 244–245; Willem Frijhoff, *Fulfilling God’s Mission: The Two Worlds of Dominie Everardus Bogardus, 1607–1647* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 290–293.
33. C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600–1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1977), 113.
34. Pauline Lunsingh-Scheurleer, ‘Uitwisseling van staatsieportretten op Ceylon in 1602,’ in *Aan de overkant: Ontmoetingen in dienst van de VOC en WIC*, ed. Lodewijk Wagenaar (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2015), 165–197.
35. Quoted in Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 67–69.
36. Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* (Cornell University Press, 2016); See also Alexander Bick, *Governing the Free Sea: The Dutch West India Company and Commercial Politics, 1618–1645* (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2012); and Pepijn Brandon and Karwan Fatah-Black, “For the Reputation and Respectability of the State”: Trade, the Imperial State, Unfree Labor, and Empire in the Dutch Atlantic,’ in *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, ca. 1500–1914*, ed. John Donoghue and Evelyn Jennings (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 84–108.
37. Michiel van Groesen, *Amsterdam’s Atlantic: Print Culture and the Making of Dutch Brazil* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
38. See Elmer Kolfin, ‘*Omphalos Mundi*: The Pictorial Tradition of the Theme of Amsterdam and the Four Continents, Circa 1600–1665,’ in *Aemulatio: Imitation, Emulation and Invention in Netherlandish Art from 1500 to 1800*. Essays in Honor of Eric Jan Sluijter, ed. Anton Boschloo et al. (Zwolle: Waanders, 2011), 383–392; quote on 385.
39. On Amsterdam’s urban development and self-presentation in the seventeenth century, see the useful overview in Marjolein ‘t Hart, ‘The Glorious City: Monumentalism and Public Space in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam,’ in *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London*, ed. Patrick O’Brien et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 128–150.

40. See Caspar Barlaeus, *Medicea hospes, sive descriptio publicae gratulationis, qua Serenissimam, Augustissimamque Reginam, Mariam de Medicis, exceptit Senatus Populusque Amstelodamensis* (Amsterdam: Blaeu 1638), translated into Dutch by Joost van den Vondel: *Blyde inkomst der allerdoornluchtigste koninginne, Maria de Medicis, t'Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Blaeu, 1639). The displays are discussed in detail in D.P. Snoep, *Praal en propaganda. Triumfalio in de Noordelijke Nederlanden in de 16^e en 17^e eeuw* (Alphen aan de Rijn: Canaletto, 1975), 39–64; and Megan Blocksom, ‘Procession, Pride and Politics in the *Medicea Hospes* (1638): A Dutch Festival Book for a French Queen,’ *Dutch Crossing* 42, no. 1 (2018): 3–27. On Barlaeus’ services for the Amsterdam elite, see also Caspar Barlaeus, *The Wise Merchant*, ed. Anna-Luna Post (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).
41. Barlaeus, *Medicea hospes*, 14: ‘His remotissimarum regionum lucris & commodis fruimur.’
42. Virgil, *Aeneid* VI, 786.
43. Barlaeus, *Medicea hospes*, 30–33: ‘denique ea agit perficitque quae à magnarum Potestatum conatibus non longè abscedunt [...] cum Indis se, Moluccensibus, Persis, Arabibus, Iaponensibus, Sinis convivari jucunda animi agitatione putabat.’
44. Barlaeus, *Medicea hospes*, 37: ‘ut duabus Societatibus innixa Respublica, imperium cum Sole quaquaversum diffundat.’
45. The treatise is analysed in Weststeijn, ‘Republican Empire,’ and Idem, ‘Machiavelli in Dutch Colonial Ideology. Caspar Barlaeus, Johan Maurits of Nassau, and the Imperial Prince,’ *Storia del Pensiero Politico* 6, no. 2 (2017): 177–196.
46. For two recent interpretations, see Pieter Vlaardingerbroek, ‘An Appropriated History: The Case of the Amsterdam Town Hall (1648–1667),’ in *The Quest for an Appropriate Past*, ed. Enenkel and Ottenheyen, 455–481; Arthur Weststeijn, ‘Imperial Republics: Roman Imagery in Italian and Dutch Town Halls, c. 1300–1700,’ in *Renovatio, inventio, absentia imperii. From the Roman Empire to Contemporary Imperialism*, ed. Wouter Bracke, Jan de Maeyer, and Jan Nelis (Leuven: Brepols, 2018), 93–116.
47. See Katharine Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam* (Utrecht: Haentjes Dekker & Gumbert, 1959), 169–188; Eymert-Jan Goossens, *Het Amsterdams paleis. Schat van beitel en penseel* (Amsterdam: Waanders, 2010), 33–45.
48. The paintings, now in the collection of the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, are reproduced in Kees Zandvliet, *Mapping for Money: Maps, Plans and Topographic Paintings and Their Role in Dutch Overseas Expansion During the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2002), 219–223.

49. Beeckman's famous painting, also in the Rijksmuseum, is discussed in detail in Els M. Jacobs, 'Beeckman's Batavia,' in *Schatkamer. Veertien opstellen over maritiem-historische onderwerpen aangeboden aan Leo M. Akveld*, ed. S. de Meer et al. (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 2002), 101–113.
50. On Stalpaert, see Gea van Essen, 'Daniel Stalpaert (1615–1676) stadsarchitect van Amsterdam en de Amsterdamse stadsfabriek in de periode 1647 tot 1676,' *Bulletin KNOB* 99, no. 4 (2000): 101–120.
51. For an overview of VOC buildings in Amsterdam, see Roelof van Gelder and Lodewijk Wagenaar, *Sporen van de Compagnie. De VOC in Nederland* (Amsterdam: De Bataafse Leeuw, 1988), 60–81. The classical architecture of the Admiralty's Arsenal is discussed in Sjoerd de Meer, *'s Lands Zeemagazijn* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1994).
52. G.J. Hoogewerff, ed., *De twee reizen van Cosimo de' Medici, prins van Toscane, door de Nederlanden (1667–1669). Journaelen en documenten* (Amsterdam: J. Müller, 1919).
53. On the imperial palaces of Italy, Spain, France and England, cf. Thomas Dandelet, *The Renaissance of Empire in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
54. Paul Knolle and Everhard Korthals Altes, eds., *Nicolaas Verkolje (1673–1746). De fluwelen hand* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2011), 88–89.
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56. The medal is in the collection of the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, object number NG-VG-1-1862. See also Femke Gaastra, *Bewind en beleid bij de VOC. De financiële en commerciële politiek van de bewindhebbers, 1672–1702* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1989), 238–239.
57. Lynn Hunt, Margaret C. Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *The Book That Changed Europe: Picart & Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). On Picart's Dutch context, see Inger Leemans, 'Picart's Dutch Connections: Family Trouble, the Amsterdam Theatre and the Business of Engraving,' in *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision on Religion*, ed. M.C. Jacob, L. Hunt, and W. Mijnhardt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 35–58.
58. Jean le Clerc, *Histoire des Provinces-Unies des Pays-Bas, depuis la naissance de la République (1560) jusqu'à la Paix d'Utrecht et le Traité de la Barrière conclu en 1716: avec les principales medailles et leur explication*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Z. Chatelain, 1723–1728).
59. Geerlof Suikers and Isaac Verburg, *Algemene kerckelyke en werelddyke geschiedenis des bekenden aardkloots*, vol. 4 (Amsterdam: Gerard and Rudolf Wetstein, 1726), sig. 3v: 'de Maatschappyen, tot uitbreiding van den koophandel onzer vaderlanderen, daar de zon op- en daar zy onder gaat.'
60. François Janiçon, *Etat présent de la République des Provinces-unies et des pays qui en dépendent* (The Hague: Van Duren, 1729): 'l'empire de la

mer [...] du Monde ou elle étend son commerce.' The engraving is also included in the Dutch translation of 1731.

61. Fran ois Valentyn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indi n*, vervattende een naaukeurige en uitvoerige verhandelinge van Nederlands mogentheyd in die gewesten, 5 vols. (Dordrecht: Johannes van Braam; Amsterdam: Gerard onder de Linden, 1724–1726). For analysis, see J org Fisch, *Hollands Ruhm in Asien: Fran ois Valentyns Vision des niederl ndischen Imperiums im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1986); R.R.F. Habiboe, *Tot verheffing van mijne natie: het leven en werk van Fran ois Valentijn (1666–1727)* (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 2004); and Siegfried Huigen, 'Antiquarian Ambonese. Fran ois Valentyn's Comparative Ethnography (1724)', in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*, ed. Siegfried Huigen, Jan de Jongh, and Elmer Kolfin (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 171–200.
62. See Siegfried Huigen, 'De "Schryver" als Oosterling. Een interpretatie van de titelprent van *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indi n* van Fran ois Valentyn,' *Nieuw Letterkundig Magazijn* 32 (2014): 10–18.
63. Jan Wagenaar, *Hedendaagsche historie, of Tegenwoordige staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Isaak Tirion, 1739).
64. Jan de Marre, *Batavia, begrepen in zes boeken* (Amsterdam: Adriaan Wor, 1740).
65. This undated etching can be found in the collection of the Rijkmuseum, object number RP-P-OB-50.839.
66. *An Explanation of the Painting in the Royal Hospital at Greenwich by Sir James Thornhill* (London, 1730), 14; See also Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, 167–168.
67. It is now in the collection of the British Library, file name G70067-73.
68. See Armitage, *Ideological Origins*, 170–186.
69. Quoted in Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State. Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 70.
70. On this transformation, see Chapter 7 in this volume by Ren  Koekkoek.
71. See e.g. Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff, 'Een klein land dat de wereld bestormt. Het nieuwe Rijksmuseum en het Nederlandse koloniale verleden,' *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 129, no. 1 (2014): 156–169. Cf. also Gert Oostindie, *Postkoloniale Beeldenstormen* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2018) and the ensuing debate with Martijn Eickhoff and Barbara Henkes, published online at: <https://www.historici.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Henkes-Eickhoff-20-08-postkoloniale-beeldenstormen.pdf> and <https://www.historici.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Oostindie-Dupliek-Daendels-2018.pdf>.

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CHAPTER 4

Hyper-Imperialism: The Dutch Vision of Empire and the Expansion of the European World

Benjamin Schmidt

I: FROM MAIDEN TO QUEEN

Two early modern visions of the Dutch in the world: The first dates from the early seventeenth century, not long after the incorporation of the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or VOC) and just a few years before the establishment of its sibling, the Dutch West India Company (*Geocrooyerde West-Indische Compagnie* or WIC) (Image 4.1). A broad panorama printed on four large sheets by the well-regarded engraver and mapmaker Claes Janszoon Visscher, the *Profile of Amsterdam, Seen from the IJ* (1611) presents an allegory of that flourishing city receiving the riches of the world.¹ In the center sits the Maiden of Amsterdam, splendidly outfitted and of regal countenance—‘adorned [*opgepronckt*] as an empress’, according to the accompanying text—who clasps in one hand a miniature ship and in the other a crown, a staff, and the city’s coat of arms. Toward her parade

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Image 4.1 Detail of Claes Jansz. Visscher (II), *Profile of Amsterdam, Seen from the River IJ* (Amsterdam, 1611). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

the peoples of the world, ‘each with their finest wares’: representatives of European countries gather behind her to the right; nations of the north (‘a Laplander’ and ‘Muscovite’, for example) collect to her left; and, approaching more directly and intently—foreground, center-left—troop a cluster of visitors from afar, including ‘East-Indians’ (bearing pepper, pearls, and porcelain), ‘West-Indians’ (delivering sugar, tobacco, and parrots), and ‘Guineans’ (representing Africa, with ivory, silver, and gold). In this conception of the world, Amsterdam—and, by extension, the province of Holland and the nascent Dutch Republic—graciously receives bounty from the four corners of the earth.²

Jump ahead almost exactly a century. We are now in the early eighteenth century—the WIC has recently gone bankrupt, while the VOC has pulled back from some of its prior imperial projects—and we are witness to another procession of peoples, once again, from across the world, who snake around a central globe meant to represent the *orbis terrarum* (Image 4.2). This time the Baroque engraving comes from the masterful hand of Romeyn de Hooghe, and it is a tour de force of allegorical



Image 4.2 After Romeyn de Hooghe, frontispiece (etching) to *La galerie agréable du monde* (Leiden, c. 1729). Bibliothèque nationale de France

economy.³ The parade is distilled to the essence of continental envoys: a pair of Africans (still toting tusks of ivory), a couple of feather-decked Amerindians (bearing a roll of tobacco), and two Asians bringing up the rear (carrying a porcelain urn). They deliver their treasures, once more, to a seated woman, richly attired and nobly adorned, surrounded by the tools of early modern imperial expansion—maps, books, compasses, and so on. This time, however, the allegory represents not the Maiden of Amsterdam but Queen Europa, and the didactic message has shifted from a provincial to more broadly global vision of empire, from a vista looking out from the banks of the IJ to a grander expression of Europe's worldly ambitions. Or so it might seem. For while the de Hooghe print offers a vision of the world, in all its far-flung parts, paying its respect to Europa—empire is on the march—it derives, all the same, from the ateliers of Amsterdam. It is a Dutch-designed vision, to be sure, yet a vision of European empire.⁴

The duelling visions of empire staged by the two prints illustrate shifting sentiments about the Dutch, no less Europe, in the world. The earlier image follows a familiar pattern of parochial projection—par for the course for an emerging urban emporium (Amsterdam) and a newly sovereign state (the Dutch Republic), which, having gained de facto independence from Habsburg Spain in 1609, now nurtured higher aspirations.⁵ The later composition lays out something substantially different, namely a conception of *Europe* ascendant—there is nary a sign of Amsterdam—which de Hooghe constitutes in strikingly global, veritably imperial terms. This broader presentation and its articulation of an ambitious ‘Europe’ turned out to be immensely influential over the coming years, offering simultaneously a vision of *empire*—Europa receives the largesse of the world, laid literally at her feet—and a vision of *Europe*, which features as a technologically sophisticated, commercially omnivorous, geographically expansive queen of the world. This would be the vision that ushered in modern Western imperialism and the global age that ensued. That it developed from the ateliers of Amsterdam points to a critical, if overlooked, role played by the Dutch in envisioning empire and envisioning the expansion of Europe in the world.

It indicates, as well, something distinctive about the ‘Dutch’ vision of empire: its parochial origins notwithstanding, the Dutch-generated vision of empire instigated a new *European* sensibility. This occurred over time, as the two prints suggest, as a progressive process. The evolving global image produced in the Netherlands endeavoured, in the first place, to promote the Dutch in the world (or at least Amsterdam as the embodiment of Dutch global aspirations) and, decades later, to *efface* the Dutch imperial project by allowing it to be subsumed by the conceit of ‘Europe’ in the world. The second formulation does not do away with the idea of national imperial ventures and with the characteristic propaganda that supported them. The vision of empire expressed by Visscher’s 1611 patriotic panorama (along with numerous other, similarly designed Dutch sources from the first half of the seventeenth century) finds parallel expression, for example, in British and French materials of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—this is how imperial propaganda typically works. Yet alongside these national expressions stands a competing image of Europe in the world and indeed of *Europe* per se. De Hooghe’s engraving is one of several originating in Dutch workshops at the turn of the eighteenth century that promoted a distinctly continental vision of global expansion. These sources express a generically European

perspective in place of a specifically Dutch, English, French, or Spanish one; they offer a wide-angle view of a world in which ‘Europe’ makes its way abroad. The images do not, by any means, do away with imperial sensibilities, but they replace them with something vaster, grander, more all-encompassing: they present a hyper-imperial perspective on the world. Hyper-imperialism incorporated more than any specific national agenda and projected more than any single colonial program. Rather, it situated an ascendant ‘Europe’ in a wider colonial world, thus establishing a motif and sensibility that would hold remarkable sway through the so-called age of empire.

The Dutch-devised vision of empire—which would become a European vision of empire and an enticement to colonial expansion—turns out to be of great consequence for global history. It derived from the distinctive circumstances of the Netherlands, along with the canny strategies of the artists and workshops, writers and printers, who designed the images and projected their visions of the early modern world. They did so in various sources of geography—prints and texts, above all, yet also other forms of visual and rhetorical expression—and these sources tell a fascinating story of how the Netherlands assimilated and then situated themselves in the early modern world. This story pertains not only to Dutch global expansion and the imperial history of the Netherlands; it speaks, as well, to the development of European visions of empire and the colonial history that relates to it. As such, it offers a useful corrective to that historiography and an important revision to prevailing narratives that see ‘European’ colonialism emerging fully formed in the eighteenth century. It did not. The appearance on the global stage of *Homo europaeus*—the protagonist of postcolonial theory—has a backstory, and that story relates directly to Dutch ateliers and Dutch visions of empire. The Dutch case may be distinctive, yet it is also instructive and instrumental to the construction of ‘Europe’ and the broader history of modern colonialism and empire.⁶

II: COLONIZED AND COLONIZERS

The distinctive case of the Netherlands derives from a distinctive site of departure. The Dutch entered the age of European expansion from an utterly unique vantage point: from under the imperial shadow of Habsburg Spain, thus themselves subjects of an empire. This meant that their earliest gambit in Europe’s overseas scramble—their early

seventeenth-century go at global expansion, both in the East and West Indies—originated from a singular imperial vision. It rested on an *anti-imperial* foundation, rhetorically speaking, insofar as the Dutch fashioned themselves the Anti-Habsburg; they imagined themselves sailing to the New World (to take the sharper example) less to conquer than to ally with the indigenous Americans against ‘Spanish tyranny’. This took place, furthermore, at the pivotal moment when the Dutch *became* Dutch following their national revolt against the Spanish Crown. This formative, defiant political moment also marks the opening chapter of the Dutch ‘enterprise of the Indies’ (to invoke Columbus’s famous expression) and imperial ‘grand design’ (the term favoured by early Dutch colonialists: *groot desseyn*), which emerged simultaneously from the crucible of battle—the intention to attack the enemy’s thinly defended overseas possessions, its weak colonial underbelly—and the fiery workshops of the rebel propagandists. The latter seized upon the trope of ‘Spanish tyranny in the Indies’ to make the highly idiosyncratic case that their enemy’s enemy was their friend and potential ally in the war against Habsburg ‘universal monarchy’. A global campaign against the haughty Habsburg empire justified a global alliance with those who opposed Habsburg imperium. This conceit legitimated, at least in its rhetorical formulation, Dutch overseas engagements in their earliest years. And while such rhetoric may have been far-fetched—it was eventually discarded when the exigencies of commerce and colonization superseded those of alliance and brotherhood—it nonetheless shaped Dutch conceptions of their place in the world as these developed in the opening years of the seventeenth century.⁷

This early rhetorical moment sustained Dutch imperial visions through the first several decades of the seventeenth century, even if it would yield, by the middle of the century, to the hard-nosed realities of Dutch imperial actions. In the meantime, however, an entirely distinctive and ultimately influential form of colonial discourse developed in the Low Countries, which offered a novel vision of empire—of its motives, practices, and hoped for outcomes. This discourse contributed, as well, in subtle and often unremarked ways, to what might be thought of as a Northern European vision of empire: strategies for overseas action shared by Dutch, English, and French theorists of empire. The terms of this rhetorical construct were rooted in the anti-Habsburg and Protestant polemics of the sixteenth century, which gained force following the Revolt of the Netherlands in the final decades of the century.

The argument was simple. The dreadful deeds of the Habsburg ‘universal monarchy’ were offensive across all of its global territories, and those abominable acts visited upon the indigenous peoples of the New World reflected those perpetrated in the Old World—for example, against the inhabitants of the Low Countries. (Spain’s transgressions in Italy were also singled out for rebuke; meanwhile Habsburg colonial conduct was generalized so as to encompass Iberian aggression in Asia no less America.) The key witness for the prosecution was himself a Spaniard and an eyewitness to the horrendous deeds he described, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas; and the Dominican’s brief against Castile for its ‘destruction of the Indies’ was publicized primarily—and relentlessly—by printers of the Netherlands, who transformed a relatively obscure Spanish text into a potent piece of anti-Spanish propaganda.⁸ They also bruited its contents widely. Las Casian arguments show up incessantly in the pamphlets of the Dutch rebel party, and they flow clearly through several of the key documents of the Revolt—most strikingly, in William of Orange’s foundational *Apologie*.⁹ The net effect of this rhetorical campaign was to blacken the reputation of Habsburg Spain for its colonial misdeeds in Europe (above all, the Low Countries) and overseas. They were globally iniquitous.

The solution, likewise, was simple. The Dutch would ally with the enemies of Castile, both at home and abroad, and thereby overturn the global ‘tyranny’ of the Habsburg empire. This strategy suggested, moreover, not merely kinship with the inhabitants of America (and, theoretically, with those suffering under Hispano-Portuguese influence in Asia) but a grander imperial vision for all who would oppose Spain. This was a capacious category that included the activist, enterprising, Hispanophobic factions spread across Northern Europe. And it embraced expansionist Protestants. For while the anti-Catholic stream of this anti-Habsburg critique was not necessarily the most splashy—Las Casas was, after all, presenting his case from under a Dominican habit—an undercurrent of traditional anti-Papal, Reformation invective in these sources is easily detected. As such, the Dutch vision of empire—to take the battle to the Habsburg enemy at home and abroad; to challenge the papal bull that arrogantly granted the non-European world to the care of Spain and Portugal; to offer an antidote to the poisonous offenses committed across the globe by servants of the Spanish crown—was adopted outside of the Netherlands, as well. It became the anti-Habsburg model of empire. It was appropriated by adventure-minded Elizabethans, such

as Sir Walter Ralegh, who hoped to perform a ‘courteous conquest’ in the Americas and thus undo the shamelessly discourteous acts of the *conquistadores*, and it informed the reports of those French Huguenots of the mid-to-late sixteenth century who decried the massacres perpetrated by Habsburg soldiers in *La Floride* and other sites where French Calvinists had endeavoured to counteract the ‘extreme cruelty’ of the Spanish.¹⁰ More to the point, it shaped the programmatic writings of the Dutch merchant-investor Willem Usselincx, who began to lobby, in a series of forceful pamphlets penned in the early years of the seventeenth century, for a West Indies company, an enterprise that was conceived expressly to ‘save’ the Indians from the cruelty of Spain. And from these influential pamphlets emerged the original proposals for the Dutch West India Company, which was ultimately founded in 1621.¹¹

The project of Usselincx and the upstart Dutch Republic presented, in this way, a distinctive vision of empire. It posited an innovative, anti-Habsburg paradigm of overseas enterprise: both in the literal sense that the goal was to attack the Spanish and Portuguese (under Habsburg control since 1580) overseas and recapture their ill-seized colonies—to conquer, as it were, the *conquistadores*—and in the broader ethical sense that the Dutch vision of empire was meant to differ *morally* from the existing Spanish example. Whereas the latter was established through violence and greed, and threatened to spread the poisonous practices of Catholicism abroad, the Dutch model derived from putatively pressing moral imperatives: to save the Indians and all others harassed by the Habsburg ‘universal monarchy’ and to deliver, in place of papist Spanish tyranny, pious Protestant governance.

III: AN EMPIRE OF GEOGRAPHY

The initial, ideologically inspired Dutch vision of empire, elaborated in the opening years of the seventeenth century, ceded by middle of the century to the exigencies of Dutch imperial action: their settlements in North and South America, their slave-trading posts in West Africa, and their hard-nosed strategies for commercial expansion in Asia. If the Dutch originally packaged their overseas ambitions in quasi-moral terms—as a mission to protect the ‘innocent’ Indians and to bring proper (Protestant) religion to America, no less Asia—these rhetorical tropes would soon fade, as the Dutch developed and cultivated more plainly colonial programs. These take off over the first half

of the seventeenth century, in concert with the drumbeat of war against Spain.¹² The rise of the Dutch Atlantic empire is particularly impressive.¹³ By the 1640s, the WIC controlled colonies and coasts in North and South America, in the Caribbean and West Africa, and these were adroitly managed under the direction of Johan Maurits, the prince of Nassau-Siegen and a cousin of the Dutch *stadhouder*.¹⁴ Yet imperial tides shifted once again post-1648: a planter revolt in Brazil (led by displaced Portuguese sugar-mill owners), a series of Anglo-Dutch wars (which spanned both the North Sea and North Atlantic), and the bankruptcy of the WIC (not least, from the costs of war and imperial over-extension) much diminished, and then all but extinguished, the Dutch Atlantic empire. Meanwhile in Asia, the Dutch begin to cede, in the final decades of the seventeenth century, relative market share to Britain and France. It is not that the Dutch retreat altogether from overseas engagements: far from it. Yet they shift from what had been a strategy of aggressive territorial expansion—standard operating procedure for early modern imperialists—to an empire predicated chiefly on trade.

And with this shift comes a corresponding transformation of the Dutch vision and rhetoric of empire, as talk of ‘innocent’ indigenes and calls for ‘pious’ commerce subside. In its place? What is most striking about Dutch publications in these years (the final decades of the seventeenth century and the opening few of the eighteenth) is the very absence of a vision of a particularly Dutch empire. On the contrary, printed texts and visual arts that engage with the overseas world—books, maps, prints, paintings, and so on—go out of their way to *efface* the Dutch global presence. In fact, rather than a vision of a particularly *Dutch* empire—of Dutch colonial activities, Dutch commercial expansion, Dutch global attainments—these sources project a vision of *Europeans* engaging with the world: hence Queen Europa and her foreign suitors (cf. Image 4.2). These texts and images, moreover, tend to amalgamate the imperial powers of the West by offering, in place of a specifically ‘Dutch’, ‘British’, ‘French’, or ‘Spanish’ angle on the world, a broadly ‘European’ perspective. Rather than narrating the actions and advances of this or that imperial enterprise, in other words, these sources linger on the myriad peoples and products, landscapes and *naturalia*, wonders and pleasures, of a widely accessible, mutually attractive exotic world.

These sources range broadly. They include histories and ethnographies of foreign nations, and vast printed compendia that describe the ‘races’, religions, and natural wonders of the world. They embrace, as well, a

great variety of media, comprising decorative maps and global atlases; an abundance of prints and paintings that depict the landscapes, cityscapes, peoples, and precious products of the world; and several varieties of material arts embellished with images of the world. And these sources spread extensively. Printed volumes produced in Holland—to cite but one example and one medium—appeared not only in Dutch and Latin editions, but also and routinely translated into French, German, and even Spanish. Collectively, these materials offered European consumers a multi-media geography of the world. Indeed, in the final decades of the seventeenth century, the Dutch became Europe's leading purveyors of global knowledge: of geopolitical knowledge, of historical knowledge, of natural-historical knowledge, and of material knowledge of the non-European world. They offered an innovative vision of the world to those who were themselves increasingly engaged with the world. These sources demonstrate, in short, how the Dutch in these years cultivated, rather than a territorial empire, an empire of geography.¹⁵

The emergence of a new brand of geography and its manufacture in the Netherlands, more particularly, pertains, in yet another way, to the distinctiveness of the Dutch vision of empire. The production in the Netherlands of knowledge of the non-European world and the formulation and circulation of a form of imperial ‘science’ by the Dutch—who positively excelled at the business of making and disseminating books, maps, prints, paintings, and artefacts that in some way described and delineated the non-European world—is striking for its timing, tenor, and trajectory. It came at a moment when the Dutch were themselves recalibrating and reducing their national imperial ambitions. Gone, more or less, was the WIC’s Atlantic empire (even while illicit trade would persist); and, while the machinery of Dutch-Asian traffic continued to hum, the VOC had begun to forfeit some of its commercial dominance to the British and French East India companies. More to the point, the sources of worldly knowledge produced in the Republic, rather than pitching to a Dutch audience—by celebrating this or that Dutch ‘conquest’ abroad or by highlighting potential Dutch colonial expansions—appealed more subtly to a generic ‘European’. This pattern of consumption can be readily deduced from patterns of production. Editions in English, French, German, and Latin; widely circulated maps, which needed no translation; prints, painting, and material arts that sold across Europe: all indicate the capacious market for Dutch-made geography and for other Dutch-made products that offered Europeans an image of the world.¹⁶

All of this points to a striking quality of the Dutch vision of the world—and of empire—in this pivotal period of imperial projection and European expansion. The forms of colonial knowledge that derived from the Netherlands in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did not directly or principally support Dutch colonial power, at least not in ways most postcolonial theorists understand that equation ('knowledge is power'). This is distinctive in yet another way. The production and consumption of Dutch sources related to the non-European world, which circulated knowledge of the non-European world widely—and which carried in them the seeds of what would come to be called colonial 'science'—confounds our expectations of the way knowledge and power are intended to correlate. Here a brief historiographical turn is in order. The key arguments of Edward Said's *Orientalism* pertain precisely to the ways cultures of colonial knowledge influence regimes of imperial power.¹⁷ Said's dialectics of knowledge and power (which he extrapolated, in turn, from the insights of Michel Foucault's work on the 'archaeologies' and 'genealogies' of knowledge), even as they have been critiqued and nuanced over the years, remain the foundations on which colonial studies rest.¹⁸ Yet the case of the early modern Netherlands and its role in the production of extra-European geography—certainly a key form of colonial knowledge—reveals a fissure in this construct. Dutch 'knowledge'—the forms of geography made in the Netherlands—did not support Dutch power, at least not the prototypically national-imperial form of power that Said and others identify in their postcolonial critiques. It did support a form of *soft* power—the pre-eminence of the Dutch in the business of geography—and it also supported a wave of European expansion, which would begin to swell in the early eighteenth century and crest by the late nineteenth. But Dutch sources did not pay particular attention to Dutch colonial expansion per se. Dutch geography fed the aspirations of *European* empires.

That Said did not even identify the Netherlands among the sources of colonial knowledge—there is nary a mention of the Dutch in *Orientalism*—is significant. It speaks to the success of Dutch ateliers in purveying, rather than a parochially Dutch product, a seemingly European one. It speaks to their ability to elide the Dutch role as a colonial actor and to fashion a European figure in its place—what Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler have called *Homo europaeus* and what the engraver Romeyn de Hooghe allegorized as Queen Europa. And just as the early modern Dutch managed to obscure their place in the

production of colonial knowledge, modern Dutch (and indeed modern European) historiography has, likewise, tended to overlook or perhaps even obscure Dutch imperial presence. The critic Ann Stoler has written, in a slightly different context, of the ‘colonial aphasia’ that European nations can seem to suffer in the aftermath of their imperial past (her reference is to France and its colonies).¹⁹ ‘Aphasia’ in Stoler’s critical vocabulary supplants the more common ‘amnesia’ or simply ‘forgetting’, yet in all cases the aim is to underscore the ways modern European nations can occlude their imperial past. In the case of the Netherlands, history and historiography may work in concert, insofar as the successful effacement of the Dutch in sources of early modern geography may portend the muted narrative of Dutch empire in sources of *modern* history: the ability of the Dutch to fly under the radar of imperial historiography. That said, what the Dutch did devise and promote in these early modern sources is no less critical to the field of colonial studies, namely a vision of Europe in the world and a projection of hyper-imperialism.

IV: CASE IN POINT: THE DUTCH, ‘EMPIRE’, AND JAPAN

To recap: Around the turn of the seventeenth century, as the Dutch were in the process of becoming Dutch, waging an all-out war of independence against Habsburg Spain, they cast their eyes abroad, where they endeavoured to extend the patriotic battle against the enemy. The Dutch vision of empire in this early period radiated a rosy, morally-tinged hue. The Dutch hoped to liberate the indigenous Americans from the tyranny of Spain, their shared enemy and mutual colonial antagonist, and they aspired, otherwise, to model a more virtuous form of colonial, no less commercial, conduct than the Iberians. This was a plainly provincial vision of empire. By the turn of the eighteenth century, however, when the Dutch no longer nurtured such national imperial aspirations, they no longer propagated an expressly *Dutch* vision of empire. On the contrary, the Dutch served as mediators of *European* knowledge of empire, producing a large variety of sources in these years that presented a broadly European vision of the exotic world. In these sources, moreover, Dutch producers subtly and cleverly removed themselves from the global scenes they sketched and narrated, casting instead a generically European protagonist in the world. Rather than a Dutch vision of empire, in other words, they projected a European vision of global action; they projected a brand of hyper-imperialism.

The Dutch remained, of course, actively engaged in the world—as factors in various ports of trade, as conduits for inter-Asian commerce, as mediators of global geographic knowledge—and this raises the question of how to project a vision of empire and of ‘Europeans’ in the world in which the Dutch cast no shadow. Nowhere would this challenge present itself more awkwardly than the case of Japan, where the Dutch East India Company occupied a veritably unique position: they were the sole European entity permitted by the Tokugawa regime to trade with Japan or even set foot on Japanese soil. This would have been the case from around 1640 until the mid-nineteenth century, a period during which Dutch ateliers continued to churn out the most vital accounts of Japan and East Asia, more generally, sources that presented a mostly European perspective of the Far East and gained popularity, accordingly.²⁰ How did they manage this trick? How, that is, did they successfully produce books and images of Japan, yet also elide the Dutch presence—indeed pre-eminence—in Japan? How did Europeans envision ‘empire’ in Japan, and how did the Dutch fit into that picture?

Among the very few non-VOC-employed Europeans who *did* land in Japan was Lemuel Gulliver, who touched down on the island of Honshu in late May of 1709 and left an account of his experience, recorded by Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726).²¹ Gulliver offers an intriguing perspective both on Japan (which is the only land he visits that can be identified on a bona fide map) and on the Dutch presence in Japan. In the process, he also provides insights into the Dutch vision of the world—their own carefully curated image of their place and role in the expanding early modern globe—and of the world’s vision of the Dutch, with whom Gulliver must engage during his Japanese sojourn. His engagement centres on a fascinating episode—a sharp satire of European overseas traffic—that, *inter alia*, illustrates how the Dutch vision of empire projected, as it were, on to the wider European screen. In fact, though set in Japan, the episode touches mostly on European concerns—religion and commerce, above all—and on European rivalries, particularly between the Dutch and the British. More broadly, the affair brings into focus what constitutes ‘European’ and how a ‘vision’ of overseas empires could impinge on these qualities.

Upon arrival in Japan, Gulliver has two pressing concerns that he wishes to discuss (rather improbably) with the emperor (by which Swift had in mind the Tokugawa shogun). The first has to do with his prospects of getting back to Europe, and Gulliver explains that his ‘European

[...] Countenance’—a vague, but discernibly racialist, quality—invites certain accommodations from the Japanese. They apparently did not distinguish among categories of ‘European’, and he is given safe passage to Edo (Tokyo), from where he secures further assurances of a voyage back to Europe. The second matter sheds a bit more light on what is meant in this context by ‘European’: Northern European, the reader comes to understand, and implicitly Protestant. And here Swift thrusts the reader into the confessional debates of the period, particularly over the delicate matter of religious icons. For Gulliver expresses his ‘Scruple’ over the prospect of ‘trampling upon the Crucifix’, a performance of apostasy that he links with Dutch traders in ‘Nangasac’ (Nagasaki).²² Swift garbles here several bits of *Japanalia*, although his arresting reference is relatively accurate and historical. The ‘trampling’ he has in mind would have been executed on icons, not crosses, typically prints or sculpted images bearing traditional Christian iconography (Pietà, Ecce Homo, Madonna of the Rosary, etc.); these were used for the practice of *e-fumi* or ‘picture stepping’ (絵踏み), the object itself technically called *fumi-e* (踏み絵: ‘stepping-on picture’). The performance of *e-fumi*—which Gulliver is at pains to avoid—was demanded by the shogunate, particularly in Nagasaki prefecture, to conduct a perverse form of census. Locals and foreigners alike (the latter necessarily employees of the VOC) were obliged to tread on Christian imagery—to perform apostasy—to demonstrate their allegiance to the Tokugawa regime rather than to a foreign, potentially subversive regime of faith (Christianity).

Gulliver’s fleeting glimpse of the Dutch in Japan—the eastern-most edges of their commercial ‘empire’, where the VOC by this time possessed exclusive European trading rights—bears significance for several reasons. First, it casts a brief flash of light on an otherwise shadowy, yet sensational, practice. The out-of-the-blue quality of Swift’s ‘iconoclastic’ anecdote (the Japanese excursion, within the framework of the novel, follows a more typical visit to Luggnagg) points to the under-the-radar nature of Dutch activities and quasi-colonial presence in Japan. By the time Swift remarked upon it, the performance of *e-fumi* went back a hundred or so years (to circa 1629), and it would continue for another century, at least—yet it passes virtually unremarked, otherwise, in European letters (Voltaire makes a brief allusion to it a few decades later in *Candide*, likewise in the context of satire).²³ Second, it reminds us of the utterly precarious state of the Dutch in Japan; for while they may have held exclusive European trading rights with the island nation,

they did so at the whim of the shogun. They did so also from the margins of Japan, literally. Dutch imperial reach extended not an inch beyond their cordoned-off factory on the man-made island of Dejima, in Nagasaki Bay, in the southeastern-most reaches of Japan and far from the court in Edo; and even there they had to follow the strict directives of the *bakufu*. As Adam Clulow has convincingly argued, Dutch imperial ambitions in Japan (and their putative colonial sway) were always more theoretical than actual, a hopeful vision sketched out in VOC chambers rather than hard power exercised on the ground.²⁴

And here we return to the Dutch vision of empire, as well as Swift's vision of the Dutch empire: the former largely shaped the latter, and, in all cases, impressions derived overwhelmingly from an exclusive set of workshops in Holland. It bears emphasizing: nearly all accounts of Japan published in early modern Europe—the texts of François Caron (1645/1661), Arnoldus Montanus (1669), François Valentijn (1724–1726), and Engelbert Kaempfer (1727/1729); along with the maps issued by the firms of Blaeu, Visscher, van Keulen, and de Wit—were manufactured in Dutch ateliers (even if they may have derived from non-Dutch materials, which Dutch publishers would have repurposed and printed under their own names). These Dutch-made materials appeared, moreover, in multiple editions and languages—Dutch, French, English, German, Latin—thereby shaping *Europe's* impression of the island empire. In this way, the Dutch-made vision projected widely. Yet even as the Dutch controlled the European narrative and prospect of Japan, they offered a fairly dim sense of the *Dutch* in Japan. Paradoxically, Dutch-made accounts do not dwell on the Dutch presence in Japan, do not highlight Dutch commerce in Japan, and rarely note the unique Dutch position in Japan. In fact, they hardly harp at all on the religious politics that led to the Portuguese-Catholic ouster from the country and their replacement by Dutch traders—the very merchants savagely satirized in *Gulliver's Travels*—except to note the wondrous cruelty of the Tokugawa regime in suppressing the Shimabara Rebellion and persecuting 'Christians'. The latter—Catholics, in fact—are described in the sources in generic terms, thus with minimal recourse to confessional rancour.

Swift follows these rhetorical leads. It is ironic that the British author seems *not* to underscore the exclusivity of the VOC in Japan—he observes Dutch traders and certainly caricatures their greed—but speaks blandly instead of 'Europeans'. During Gulliver's brief stay on the island of Honshu, he presents himself initially as a 'European' and

only later offers himself as a Dutchman in order to secure passage on the slyly named *Amboyna*, sailing to Amsterdam. (The allusion to the so-called massacre at Amboyna, site of an infamous Anglo-Dutch colonial showdown, would have been obvious to contemporary readers.) It is as a *European* spectator that Swift grants his readers a vision of Japan, and this amounts to a considerable irony: Of all spots in early modern Europe's overseas world, Japan would have ranked among the most pronouncedly and determinately Dutch. Yet it is envisioned in *Gulliver's Travels* as a place where a 'European' might alight and potentially traffic. Thus the Dutch-made vision of Japan, as appropriated by Swift, enables a British author to cast his own imperial vision broadly.

V: CONCLUSION: THE DUTCH, 'EUROPE', AND THE WORLD

There is a striking paradox at the heart of any historical inquiry into the Dutch vision of empire. The early modern Dutch cast a vision of empire that is pronouncedly *un-Dutch*. The Dutch turn out to be notably proficient at generating prospects of an imperial world, especially in the second half of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth, yet the global visions produced by the fecund ateliers of the Netherlands are at pains to occlude the Dutch. That said, they create something remarkably vital, all the same, by formulating a *European* vision of empire, which circulates in the influential and widely distributed volumes of Dutch-made geography and other Dutch-produced books, maps, prints, paintings, and material arts that engage with the world. In these myriad sources, the canny producers of the Netherlands promote not so much the Dutch in the world, but Europe in the world; not so much a vision of Dutch empire, but a more adoptable, malleable, amenable, pan-European vision of a hyper-imperial world.

That the idea of 'Europe' has a history is well understood.²⁵ What is perhaps less well understood are the nuances of European identity—the differences among shifting notions of 'Europe'—and the timeline of their development. The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, during which time the Dutch were busy making and marketing visions of the world and of Europe's place in it, happens to be a pivotal moment in this historical development. One hundred years earlier, Queen Europa might have been associated with her religious identity—as she is on the famous frontispiece to Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (1570), the first European atlas of the world (Image 4.3). Here the queen clasps a



Image 4.3 Frontispiece (engraving) to Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (Antwerp, 1570; ed. 1612)

cross-bearing orb, the *globus cruciger*, thus advertising with this ancient Christian symbol her authority in the world. She may well have perched presumptuously above the other Continents, yet hers would have been a religious perspective on the world. Meanwhile, by the time Romeyn de Hooghe etched his regal image of Europa at the turn of the eighteenth century, she bears not religious but navigational tools and other instruments for measuring and advancing—a compass on her lap, a book (rutter?) balanced on her right knee, plans for a fortress in her left hand—indicating a wholly revised agenda (cf. Image 4.2). While Queen Europa may have earlier yearned to convert the heathen souls of the *orbis terrarum*, she later calculates and contemplates how to colonize the ‘races’ of the world and to reap the tangible benefits that are delivered by the global emissaries of de Hooghe’s composition. Ortelius’s Europa hoped to transcend the confessional rancour of the late sixteenth century (the famous mapmaker was famously irenical in matters of faith). De Hooghe’s queen, by contrast, takes a secular and material approach to the world, reflecting the hyper-imperial perspective of her target audience.

Why did this reformulated ‘Europe’ emerge from the ateliers of Holland and why then? The superb draftsmen and mapmakers, etchers and printers, painters and collectors of the Dutch Republic suggest the outstanding resources that would have been enlisted for this project of describing the world. And by offering a broadly European version of the world, the producers of the Netherlands would have cleverly expanded their market: rather than a parochially pitched product describing the Dutch in the world, they designed books and maps and artefacts that appealed to a globally minded ‘European’—a newly constituted, trans-national consumer. The marketing angle here is significant. It is worth recalling the originally distinctive approach of the Netherlands when they envisioned ‘empire’: the early seventeenth-century conceit of expanding overseas to assist exotic allies in the war against Habsburg universal monarchy. What began as an idiosyncratic view of the Dutch in the world transformed, for a brief period in the early-to-mid decades of the seventeenth century, into a more ‘traditional’, territorially ambitious vision of empire. Yet as the Dutch agenda overseas shifted once again, so too did the prospects—and profits—of the Dutch vision. By the later seventeenth century, the advantages of depicting ‘Europe’ in the world outweighed the benefits of touting a Dutch imperial project that had mostly fizzled out—hence the empire of geography that developed in the final decades of the century. Geography was good business, and the Dutch proved to

be good at geography. The Dutch vision of empire was ultimately a market-savvy, hyper-imperial vision of Europeans in the world. Delivered in the form of texts and images that circulated across all of Europe, this vision proved effective both in terms of its consumer reach—it sold broadly—and its longer-term role in shaping a generically *European* vision of empire. It was these sources and this vision that set the stage for modern European expansion and the age of empire that ensued.

NOTES

1. Claes Jansz. Visscher (II), *Proefel van Amsterdam, gezien vanaf het IJ* (Amsterdam, 1611), etching and engraving, printed from four plates, 26 × 112.2 cm. The full print can be found in the collection of Rijksmuseum (object number RP-P-OB-103.723); for further details, bibliography, and an online reproduction, see: <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-103.723>.
2. Visscher, *Proefel van Amsterdam*. The quotations come from the print itself, which, in its original form, included an explanatory text and a key to the figures (and still does in the rare examples that have not been cut down to size).
3. After Romeyn de Hooghe, etching, c. 38 × 49 cm. The print serves as a frontispiece to Pieter van der Aa, *La galerie agréable du monde* (Leiden, ca. 1729).
4. De Hooghe's composition was designed originally for Carel Allard's *Orbis habitabilis oppida et vestitus*, published circa 1700 (the print itself is sometimes dated ca. 1695). As with most of de Hooghe's work, it circulated in multiple forms and publications, including those of Pieter van der Aa (a master of recycling prints), who later used it for the frontispiece of *La galerie agréable du monde* (ca. 1729).
5. The Twelve Year Truce, signed in 1609, granted the northern provinces of the Low Countries political independence from Habsburg rule, even as the fighting would continue after the truce expired. Final peace was concluded and the Dutch Republic formally recognized upon the signing of the Peace of Münster in 1648.
6. The reference to '*Homo europaeus*' alludes to the discussion of modern European colonialism in the seminal text of Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); see p. 3 and *passim*.
7. These arguments are developed more thoroughly in Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

8. Bartolomé de las Casas, *Brevíssima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (Seville, 1552), on which see Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, 95–98.
9. Willem of Orange, *The Apologie of Prince William of Orange against the Proclamation of the King of Spaine*, ed. H. Wansink (Leiden, 1969).
10. For Raleigh, see Benjamin Schmidt, ‘Ralegh’s Courteous Conquest,’ in *The Discovery of Guiana by Sir Walter Ralegh* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), 1–44; for Protestant England more generally, see Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550–1700* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). Among the Huguenots writing on *La Floride*, Nicolas Le Challeux’s work stands out for its polemical clarity. See Le Challeux, *True and Perfect Description of the Last Voyage ... into Florida*, trans. Thomas Hacket, in *The New World: The First Pictures of America*, ed. Stefan Lorant (New York, 1965). On the French Huguenots in America more broadly, see Neil Kamil, *Fortress of the Soul: Violence, Metaphysics, and Material Life in the Huguenots’ New World, 1517–1751* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).
11. Usselincx’s writings are analyzed in Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, 176–183; see also Arthur Weststeijn, ‘Republican Empire: Colonialism, Commerce and Corruption in the Dutch Golden Age,’ *Renaissance Studies* 26 (2012): 491–509.
12. These subtle paradoxes—moral colonialism and godly commerce—are deliberated in Godefridus Udemans, ‘t Geestelyck roer van ‘t coopmanschijp, dat is: Trouw bericht, hoe dat een coopman, en coopvaerder, hem selven dragen moet in syne handelinge, in pays ende in oorloge, voor Godt, ende de menschen, te water ende te lande, insonderheyt onder de heydenen in Oost- ende West-Indien (Gouda, 1638). The debate of these issues among English Protestants is discussed in Alexander B. Haskell, *For God, King, and People: Forging Commonwealth Bonds in Renaissance Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).
13. See Willem Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); Benjamin Schmidt, ‘The Dutch Atlantic: From Provincialism to Globalism,’ in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163–190.
14. Johan Maurits governed the primary Dutch colonies in Brazil and also solidified trade relations with West African rulers; the colonies in North America, meanwhile, came under the direction of Willem Kieft, who would be replaced in 1647 by Peter Stuyvesant.
15. This argument is treated more extensively in Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe’s Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

16. A case in point would be the considerable work of the Dutch artist Frans Post, who painted landscapes of tropical Brazil, yet absent any vestiges of the former Dutch colony in this region. Post's paintings sold, in fact, to collectors across Europe. See Benjamin Schmidt, 'The "Dutch" "Atlantic" and the Dubious Case of Frans Post,' in *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680–1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*, ed. Gert Oostindie and Jessica Roitman (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 249–273.
17. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).
18. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [French original 1969], trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
19. Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France,' *Public Culture* 23 (2011): 121–156. See also Paul Bijl, 'Colonial Memory and Forgetting in The Netherlands and Indonesia,' *Journal of Genocide Studies* 14 (2012): 441–461.
20. The Tokugawa policy of *sakoku* (鎖国: 'closed country') severely limited the presence of foreigners in Japan from the late 1630s, when a series of edicts led to the expulsion of almost all Europeans (who would have comprised chiefly the Portuguese and Spanish), until the arrival of Admiral Perry in 1853. The only permitted Europeans were employees of the VOC, sequestered in Dejima; otherwise, there was also a contingent of Chinese traders in Nagasaki.
21. *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World ... By Lemuel Gulliver* (London, 1726), for which see Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Christopher Fox (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1995).
22. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, 201 (emphasis ['European'] in original).
23. Voltaire [François Marie Arouet], *Candide: ou l'optimisme, traduit de l'Allemand de Mr. le Docteur Ralph* (Paris, 1775), chapitre cinquième; for which see the Modern Library edition, *Candide by Voltaire*, ed. Philip Littell (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918), 20.
24. Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).
25. The classic account is Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea*, Edinburgh University Publications: History, Philosophy and Economics, 7 (Edinburgh: University Press, 1957). See also Michael Wintle, *The Image of Europe: Visualizing Europe in Cartography and Iconography Throughout the Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and, addressing the concept of continents more broadly, Martin W. Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).



CHAPTER 5

Comparatively Exceptional: The Paradoxes of Twentieth-Century Dutch Imperialism and Decolonization

Jennifer L. Foray

Writing in a seminal 2013 piece taking stock of the state of Dutch imperial studies, Remco Raben has argued that Dutch scholars, unlike their French and British peers, have yet to produce a ‘New Imperial History.’ Instead, he claims, ‘Dutch colonial history writing has retained a thoroughly empiricist and “unproblematic” attitude and fosters a strong skepticism towards postcolonial theorization.’ As corrective, he suggests various avenues of analysis that might inform and advance Dutch historiography, whether the popular manifestations of empire, ‘the webbed character of colonial spaces,’ or the moral consequences of imperialism as reflected in the activities of philanthropic and missionary societies. For Raben, the Netherlands must constitute part of a larger imperial history, encompassing not only Europe but the world. Further, he argues, when scholars adopt a more expansive conceptualization of ‘colonial’ incorporating metropole and colony within the same analytical framework, they

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must also avoid abstract, even fetishized notions of Dutch ‘identity’—a particular problem evident in British New Imperial Histories. In sum, Raben’s piece constitutes an unequivocal, powerful call-to-action aimed at all those scholars, Dutch and non-Dutch alike, working in the field.¹

Three years after the publication of this piece, the ‘Visions of Empire in Dutch History’ conference convened a group of international scholars to address the history of thinking about both the early modern and modern Dutch empire. My contribution highlighted recurrent claims—seen in both academic and popular histories—of the modern Dutch empire as ‘exceptional,’ a political entity charting a starkly different path than that of its European imperial neighbors. Responding to some of the concerns I articulated, one of the other conference participants questioned whether the Netherlands was, in fact, prepared for a more nuanced discussion of its colonial past and postcolonial present. His question remained unanswered, but the implications were clear: for whatever reason, the Dutch had proved unable to grapple with their imperial history in the manner that other peoples and nations had done. His skepticism, I argue, points to a larger problem with the field of Dutch colonial (and decolonization) history: namely, the enduring and sometimes inexplicable focus on Dutch exceptionality.

To some extent, this tendency to emphasize exceptionality is the logical outgrowth of the tremendous range of colonial practices and policies seen throughout the European-held overseas territories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, European imperialists—no matter their national origins—believed themselves to be charting special paths, and they framed their respective colonial projects as different from that implemented in other empires or even in their own empire’s other territories. Neither the Dutch colonial project nor the decolonization process in the Dutch empire were identical to those seen elsewhere, so, naturally, we can expect a range of historiographical approaches. However, in Dutch academia at least, we can perceive an endless rhetorical loop of sorts, claiming that Dutch historiography is exceptional because the Dutch empire was exceptional, but only those aware of this exceptional status—and with the linguistic skills and positioning to best appreciate Dutch uniqueness—can explore its exceptionality.²

In this chapter, I explore how historians continue to employ these exceptionalist arguments in their scholarship, and I examine the intellectual and moral implications inherent in a particular framing device, the oft-employed ‘yes, but...’ (*ja, maar...*) construction. I am concerned

less with tracing the historical origins of these exceptionality claims than with their continued manifestations in various settings and media, whether peer-reviewed scholarship or popular histories and museum exhibits. Finally, I reflect upon how a newer generation of historians interested in the Dutch empire and decolonization might use subtle rhetorical shifts to reorient scholarship in a more inclusive, and yet more analytically rigorous, direction.

Somewhat paradoxically, this persistent focus on exceptionalism simultaneously demands comparative analysis—for how else can we demonstrate whether the Dutch empire can be considered unique?—and positions the Netherlands as beyond the realm of comparative analysis. Admittedly, there is a dearth of truly comparative studies covering the range of European (and non-European) empires. Scholars working outside of the Netherlands have tended to ignore or only briefly address the modern Dutch empire, although a spate of newly published texts has broken with this tradition to focus on the lesser-studied modern empires of the Portuguese and Dutch especially. For their part, prominent scholars, academic institutions, and publishing venues based in the Netherlands have encouraged such comparative analyses, albeit with uneven results.³

Admittedly, comparative history, when done well, is difficult, laborious, and time-consuming. Moreover, as Dutch scholar Susan Legène has recently cautioned, reflexively adopting a comparative angle also introduces a new set of issues. Writing after her participation in the ‘Visions of Empire in Dutch History’ conference and its attendant discussions, Legène rejects an “add-on approach” to an intellectual history of [Dutch] empire that, in terms of both periodization and perspective, would be inspired by methodological nationalism.⁴ This ‘add-on approach’ assumes that Dutch historiography lags behind that of other imperial centres, and that Dutch visions of empire should be situated alongside British visions of empire, to cite perhaps the most extensive (and chauvinistic) national historiography. In opposition to this approach, Legène calls upon historians of the Dutch empire and decolonization to explore the deep entanglements and connections between European imperialists and nation-states, and to do so by collaborating with anthropologists, museum professionals, literary scholars, and others operating outside of the formal discipline of history.⁴

Although published before Legène’s criticism, Elizabeth Buettner’s 2016 study entitled *Europe After Empire: Decolonization, Society, and*

Culture demonstrates how such ideas might be put into practice. Buettner, in her words, explicitly rejects ‘both the older academic tendency to keep Western European nations separate from their empires but also the persisting one of keeping them separate from each other.’ Taking aim at enduring notions of exceptionalism seen in all national historiographies, she instead focuses on ‘parallel processes’ and connections seen throughout Europe. Rather than structuring her work solely around discrete national case studies, she foregrounds larger trends and developments, such as the migratory flows of people, practices, and ideas that shaped European societies after 1945.⁵ Importantly, Buettner also addresses why, and to what ends, these exceptionalist claims persist throughout contemporary Europe. No postcolonial European society, she argues, has fully come to terms with the demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural shifts of recent decades, and, yet, Europeans continue to maintain that their particular national brands of colonialism and decolonization were unique. Thus, ‘insistent singularities and supposed imperial uniqueness are echoed by often hollow claims about particular countries’ special talents for approaching cultural diversity in postcolonial Europe.⁶ In other words, a continued focus on exceptionalism serves concrete political objectives in today’s multicultural societies, with members of each country eager to be seen as moral beacons on account of both their past and present behavior.

If Buettner’s *Europe After Empire* only briefly discusses presentist concerns informing historical claims of exceptionality, Gloria Wekker’s *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*—also published in 2016—foregrounds these ideas. Amongst other points, Wekker argues that four hundred years of colonial epistemologies and practices have shaped the Netherlands’ ‘cultural archive,’ which, in turn, has shaped the images of themselves and their society constructed by Dutch men and women. For Wekker, this self-image is based upon ‘a general sense of being a small but ethically just nation that has something special to offer the world.’ That ‘something special’ could have been the prized East Indies colony or, in more contemporary times, it could be The Hague’s prominence as a centre of international justice. Claims of exceptionality can also manifest themselves in the Dutch academy’s general unwillingness to consider as relevant those intellectual frameworks first developed in other countries and contexts. Along these lines, Wekker highlights Dutch scholars’ avowed resistance to postcoloniality and intersectionality in particular. Importantly, though, Wekker does not hold up any other

national community or academic establishment as standard-bearer or model for the Netherlands. Rather, she is primarily concerned with the work yet to be done in both the Dutch academy and society-at-large.⁷ *White Innocence's* claims have clearly struck a nerve with Dutch audiences, as evidenced by the sheer volume and type of criticism it continues to provoke. But, as Larissa Schulte Nordholt and Remco Raben have recently argued, this criticism can be expected from a society engaged in colonial apologetics that deny the complex legacies of Dutch colonialism.⁸

Undoubtedly, in numerous ways, the Netherlands was just another modern empire, engaged in the same colonial practices and policies seen elsewhere. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Dutch empire, or the greater Kingdom of the Netherlands, consisted of the metropolitan (European) Netherlands, the archipelago of the East Indies, and the territories collectively known as the West Indies (the South American territory of Surinam, or Dutch Guiana; and the Caribbean islands of Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba, St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, and Saba). In these territories—but especially in its colonial crown jewel, the East Indies—the Netherlands advanced its version of a ‘civilizing mission,’ just as Third Republic France promoted *mise en valeur* in West Africa and Great Britain sought to export the railroad as the harbinger of progress and prosperity.⁹ In the final years of the nineteenth century, parliamentarians in The Hague, administrators in the East Indies’ capital of Batavia, expert ‘Indologists’ trained in Indonesian traditions and customs, and colonial power brokers of all political stripes tasked themselves with implementing a new ‘Ethical Policy’ in the East Indies. Proclaiming the Netherlands’ moral, economic, and political obligations to develop its prized colony, this guiding framework was expressed in large-scale infrastructure projects, the expansion of the colony’s network of Indonesian primary schools, the implementation of administrative reforms, and the introduction of Western-style political institutions. As implemented by colonial administrators on the ground, however, this Ethical Policy prioritized economic development above political and educational reforms, and to the benefit of Dutch, not Indonesian, interests.¹⁰ Yet, as the hallmark of an enlightened Dutch colonialism, Ethical Policy’s rosy glow remained largely intact for decades to come, as did its ‘*ja, maar...*’ phrasing: yes, Europeans in other empires may have sought to exploit their native subjects, but the Dutch forged a different, and far more edifying, path.

In both metropole and colony, trained Indies experts and administrators downplayed racial differences and race-based thinking—although these, too, marked the Dutch imperial project—and instead offered their own model of colonial governance. As described by historian Frances Gouda, the Dutch ‘cultural synthesis’ model resembled the French policy of association with its professed desire to preserve native traditions, but twentieth-century Dutch colonial administrators believed themselves to have mastered this approach. Unlike their French colleagues more interested in testing universal laws of social progress first established during the Enlightenment, the Dutch sought to ascertain local particularities through deep cultural study. Building upon *adat*, the body of traditions and laws long maintained and practised by Indonesian cultures, the Dutch could claim that their colonial rule was supported by scientific knowledge, not brute force. By extension, this approach towards colonial governance distinguished the Netherlands from its larger imperial neighbors. In other words, Gouda maintains, ‘knowledge was the handmaiden of power, whereas a display of authority without knowledge would quickly degenerate into the mindless saber-rattling of imperial Goliaths.’¹¹ Intricate knowledge of local peoples and practices would distinguish the Dutch from their larger imperial neighbors, just as it had during the Golden Age of the Dutch East Indies Company. Or, as explained more recently by Ethan Mark, a historian of modern Asia based in Leiden, the Netherlands became ‘the Little Country That Could, a nation with a remarkable capacity to punch above its weight in the global competition for riches and prestige.’ Accordingly, for Mark, it is unsurprising that ‘self-congratulatory understandings of Dutch colonialism’ have proven especially durable and potent in the Netherlands.¹²

Extending far beyond the realm of colonial governance, these claims of Dutch exceptionality also informed interactions between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the members of the world community. If the Dutch wished to succeed in a geopolitical environment dominated by larger, more powerful nations, Elsbeth Locher-Scholten has argued, the Dutch would need to compete on the grounds they knew best. Specifically, she argues, ‘the Dutch, belonging to a small nation with a strong Calvinist tradition, felt more at ease with ethics and ethical motives than with the international discourse of power and economics.’¹³ Put slightly differently by Willem Frijhoff, the Netherlands assumed the mantle of guiding nation (*gidsland*): a moral beacon shining its light upon the East Indies, indeed ‘a moral compass for the

international community.¹⁴ Again, we can discern the outlines of the ‘*ja, maar...*’ phrasing: yes, other European nations may have set off into the world to colonize other lands and peoples, but only the Netherlands did it correctly.

The Netherlands’ failure to actualize such lofty principles was hardly exceptional, since no modern European empire completely bridged the gap between theory and practice, rhetoric and policy. Nor could they: modern European colonialism can hardly be considered benign, even if some Europeans truly believed in the mission of cultural, political, and economic uplift. Still, Dutch actors believed themselves to be charting a different course than that of their imperial colleagues in Europe, and, as evidence, they could turn to the assessment provided by contemporary and especially prominent British observers. Whether writing before or after the implementation of the ‘ethical policy’ in the East Indies, British career colonial administrators such as J.W.B. Money and J.S. Furnivall favourably compared Dutch policies and practices with those employed by the British in India especially. In his 1939 *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy*, Furnivall lauded Dutch efforts at creating and maintaining a ‘Plural Society’: ‘a society in which distinct social orders live side by side, but, separately, within the same political unit.’ This kind of dual system, Furnivall suggests, might serve as a model for Burma and other British territories in the ‘Tropical Far East.’¹⁵ Popular commentaries such as Furnivall’s would have confirmed the Netherlands’ purportedly exceptional status amongst empires by validating what many Dutch observers already believed to be true. The Netherlands’ approach to colonial rule and, more broadly, the Dutch empire were both exemplary and unique.

Yet another enduring dimension of this exceptionality theme concerns the relationship between the European Netherlands (the purported metropole) and its overseas territories (the colonies), alleging that imperialism was not as integrated into the fabric of daily life in the Netherlands as it was in, say, turn-of-the-century Britain or France. According to this line of thinking, the Dutch colonies remained the sole purview of a small group of merchants, industrialists, and politicians, just as the Dutch East and West Indies Companies of earlier eras monopolized the Netherlands’ overseas ventures (and the significant profits these ventures accrued). This is not to say that this assessment is correct, or that Dutch scholars have ignored popular manifestations of empire and decolonization. On the contrary, a recent spate of works published by

academic historians, literary scholars, museum specialists, cultural critics, and journalists have explored the complicated relationship between ‘metropole’ and ‘colony,’ between the Dutch, Indonesians, and Surinamese, as seen throughout the twentieth century and continuing to the present day.¹⁶ All of these works have weakened this particular facet of the exceptionalism argument, not least by stimulating the production of similarly inflected-works focused on connectivity, networks, and shared spaces.¹⁷

Studies examining the decolonization process as it played out in the Dutch empire after 1945 similarly reflect this general preoccupation with Dutch exceptionality. Not uncommonly, such claims appear in the form of superficial or under-developed comparisons between the decolonization process as it happened in the Dutch East Indies/Indonesia and developments elsewhere. The series of events leading to Indonesian independence appear as an aberration from some kind of accepted norm or default standard for decolonization, although, of course, no such baseline for comparison exists. So, for instance, one especially prominent Dutch professor of contemporary history has referred to ‘the partly violent end of the Dutch colonial empire’ without explaining how violence of any sort, colonial or otherwise, can be deemed either complete or partial.¹⁸ This descriptor suggests that events in the Dutch empire differed from those in other European empires, which are presumed to have experienced either entirely peaceful or entirely violent transitions.

Recent generations of historians are hardly the first to claim such privileged uniqueness for Dutch decolonization. Writing in a collection of essays published in 1950, H.J. van Mook sought to explain why, and how, the decolonization process in Indonesia differed from that underway in French- and British-held territories. As perhaps the most recognizable and high-ranking colonial administrator during the waning years of the Dutch East Indies colony, Van Mook had played a leading role in the years’ long negotiation process that ultimately resulted in the Netherlands’ formal recognition of the independent Republic of Indonesia in December 1949. Now, mere months into Indonesian independence, he speculated as to why, and how, the course of events in Indonesia had diverged from those seen elsewhere, French Indochina especially. As he saw it, only the Dutch East Indies had seen pronounced foreign intervention, first by British military forces in 1945–1946 and then in the form of United Nations Security Council involvement from 1947 to 1949. Further, he argued, the Japanese had effectively

indoctrinated and trained the Indonesian youth during their World War Two occupation in a way not seen elsewhere. Lastly, the East Indies had experienced a ‘mismanaged’ surrender at the end of World War Two. With its strong economic ties to other nations, its large population, and the dramatic imagery of a ‘vast colony throwing off the shackles of its bondage’ from a ‘comparatively small and weak mother country,’ the East Indies easily attracted much attention.¹⁹ With such commentary, Van Mook purported to show why the Netherlands had lost its prized colony when other European powers had been able to retain theirs in the immediate post-Second World War period.

Now, more than seventy years later, Dutch decolonization continues to be portrayed as an exceptional, atypical series of events. A recent temporary exhibition at the Dutch Resistance Museum (Verzetsmuseum) in Amsterdam constitutes but one prominent example. From late November 2015 through early April 2016, the museum’s much-anticipated ‘Colonial War 1945-1949: Desired and Undesired Images’ (‘Koloniale Oorlog 1945-1949: Gewenst en ongewenst beeld’) exhibition explored Dutch authorities’ attempts to manipulate and otherwise obscure contemporary reportage coming out of the Dutch-Indonesian conflict of 1945–1949.²⁰ In conjunction with this exhibition, the Resistance Museum offered a number of topical activities, such as documentary film showings and talks. One panel discussion in March 2016 sought to examine the Dutch decolonization war in the East Indies in relation to ‘other decolonization movements after World War Two.’²¹ It featured three scholars—a historian of Indonesia; an anthropologist and historian whose work has centred on Vietnam; and a photography and media historian, all based in the Netherlands—in conversation with Ad van Liempt, a Dutch journalist who has written extensively on the Dutch-Indonesian conflict. In the course of this discussion, one of the participating scholars noted that, in the grand scheme of things, the Dutch-Indonesian conflict did not rank amongst the worst—that is, it was not the most violent. Rather, in terms of total number of casualties, Indonesian decolonization stood in the middle of a spectrum, with the decolonization of British India serving as a non-violent model of sorts and the French-Algerian conflict as perhaps the most deadly.²²

Approximately one year later, in May 2017, Dutch journalist Martien Hoogland similarly invoked this calculus of death as he argued that conditions in the decolonizing Dutch East Indies could be compared favourably to those in other colonies. Whereas hundreds of thousands died

during the Mau-Mau uprising in British Kenya and the French-Algerian war, the Dutch-Indonesian conflict only claimed about 100,000 Indonesian lives. Further, according to Hoogland, ‘a large percentage’ of these 100,000 Indonesian victims died not because of Dutch violence but as a result of internecine conflicts, such as those ‘between communists and Islamic groups.’²³ Putting aside the fact that historians have neither agreed upon a definitive victim count nor sought to assign cause of death in this manner,²⁴ the implications of Hoogland’s claims are clear: compared to their larger imperial neighbors who inflicted massive violence upon subject peoples in Asia and Africa, the Dutch ruled the East Indies with calm, care, and even benevolence, which, in turn, led to a much less violent decolonization process than that experienced in other European colonies.

One might argue that these are examples taken from the realm of public history, which seeks to make complex events and interpretations more comprehensible and palatable for members of the general public. As such, we might expect such popular accounts to take certain analytical liberties. But scholarly histories, too, continue to perpetuate these claims of exceptionality, perhaps in more subtle ways and perhaps unwittingly. See, for instance, a 2018 English-language scholarly article penned by three Dutch scholars affiliated with the KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, based in Leiden. Writing for a non-Dutch audience assumed to be relatively unfamiliar with the Dutch Indonesian conflict of 1945–1949, authors Gert Oostindie, Ireen Hoogenboom, and Jonathan Verwey reflected on key findings contained in their recent book-length study of ego documents written by soldiers and veterans of the Dutch-Indonesian war. The authors unequivocally state that, contrary to long-standing assumptions, the Dutch army did in fact commit war crimes in Indonesia, just as other European armies committed war crimes in places such as Algeria, Vietnam, and Angola. Oostindie, Hoogenboom, and Verwey, however, do not specify who, exactly, has made such claims, noting only that ‘there is no particular reason to assume that a Dutch army would have behaved any better, but it has taken a long time for this disturbing realization to gain currency in the Netherlands.’ Furthermore, they speculate that such ideas of Dutch exceptionalism may have ‘made it more difficult to signal and accept the occurrence of war crimes in Indonesia.’²⁵ On the whole, however, theirs is an earnest, if still vague, attempt to normalize the Dutch by empire by confronting, directly, this dominant *‘ja, maar...’* framework.

Elsewhere in the same article, the authors further attempt to normalize the Dutch situation by implying the existence of faulty yet enduring interpretations of the Dutch-Indonesian conflict, which continue to position the conflict as somehow aberrant. Specifically, they state that ‘the Indonesian Revolution was anything but a linear process heralded in by a uniform Republican government under Sukarno, but rather a chaotic period full of conflicts’ between Indonesian political and military leaders, communist and Islamic groups, central and regional authorities, and other antagonists. As a result, ‘the war of decolonization was far more complex than a straightforward conflict in which the former colonial power confronted a unified Indonesian front in a vain attempt to reassert its grip on the archipelago.’²⁶ Here, is not clear who expected this war to be a ‘straightforward’ conflict with clearly-delineated ‘sides,’ or assumed that political revolutions unfold according to some logical or even natural path. In these unsubstantiated and underexplored claims, we can discern the traces of exceptionalism: yes, all European colonial powers experienced and expected some kind of revolutionary violence, but only the Dutch experienced a less ‘straightforward’ conflict than that seen in other European colonies. This is not to say that the authors personally identify with claims that the Dutch decolonization war was exceptional. Still, they have positioned their arguments against such assumptions of exceptionality, albeit without specifying who, or what, continues to adhere to these kinds of claims.

The ‘Colonial War 1945-1949: Desired and Undesired Images’ exhibition at the Amsterdam Resistance Museum discussed above also suggested exceptionalism in similarly subtle, and perhaps unintended, ways. Curators framed the exhibition focused on ‘desirable’ and ‘undesirable’ imagery of the Dutch-Indonesian conflict around the question ‘Waardoor bleef het extreme geweld—van beide kanten—zo lang onbekend bij het grote publiek?’ That is, ‘why did the extreme violence—on both sides—stay unknown for so long for the greater public?’²⁷ The implication here is that, yes, Dutch military forces may have engaged in extremely violent acts and that such acts may have been sanitized for the purposes of domestic consumption, but that Indonesian forces did the same—thereby forcing the hand of the Dutch military, or somehow justifying its behaviour. The exhibition’s small section highlighting Republican (Indonesian) propaganda also argues that, like their Dutch counterparts, Indonesian authorities censored and manipulated imagery in order to serve concrete political ends. Although

obviously attempting to portray ‘both sides’ of the conflict and underscore Indonesians’ agency, the relatively superficial treatment of the Indonesian perspective suggests that the conflict was a symmetrical one between two similarly equipped modern armies.²⁸ Admittedly, curators may face an impossible task in achieving adequate coverage or even approximating parity in such a temporary exhibition space, but this obvious imbalance hardly seems the optimal solution.

With my own meager contribution to these discussions, I am not calling for a selective misreading or partial presentation of historical events. After all, sustained, far-reaching comparative analyses of the Dutch empire and its subsequent transformation in the mid-late twentieth century might confirm the Netherlands to be an outlier or otherwise verify a particular Dutch model of imperialism and decolonization. For this to happen, however, the Netherlands must first occupy the same analytical plane as other European—and perhaps non-European—empires, with scholars of Dutch imperialism assuming comparability, not exceptionality, as their starting point. Perhaps the persistent emphasis on exceptionalism will simply fade away with a new generation of historians concerned less with writing nation-based case studies or propping up long-standing institutions and ideologies rooted in an earlier colonial era. Indeed, within Dutch academia, a new generation of scholars is at work, their contributions prioritizing global networks and connectivity over purported Dutch uniqueness.²⁹

The large-scale, multi-institution, and government-funded research project currently underway in the Netherlands might also lead the way. With final reports expected in late 2021, ‘Independence, Decolonization, Violence and War in Indonesia, 1945-1950’ (‘Onafhankelijkheid, dekolonisatie, geweld en oorlog Indonesië 1945-1950’) ‘aims to answer questions regarding the nature, scale and causes of structural violence in Indonesia, considered in a broader political, social and international context.’³⁰ The larger research programme is divided into nine topical or thematic ‘subprojects,’ with a team of expert researchers assigned to each of these groups. Two of these subprojects adopt an explicitly comparative approach: one explores international responses and interventions in the Dutch-Indonesian conflict, and the other examines this particular war of decolonization alongside those waged in other European-held territories. Regardless of whether these subprojects’ reports explicitly reject long-standing claims towards Dutch exceptionalism, the very inclusion of these comparative topics helps

contextualize and therefore normalize the Dutch empire and its decolonization process.

As we await a potential changing of the (academic) guard and the appearance of new scholarship, we might also implement simple but nonetheless significant reforms. For one, we can remain cognizant of language, and, specifically, how language informs and reflects power, privilege, and implicit biases.³¹ Word choice matters, and ongoing conversations in the Netherlands testify to a broader recognition of language's role in understanding Dutch imperialism and decolonization. So, for instance, in late June 2018, the Research Center for Material Culture, a joint venture of three Dutch museums specializing in ethnography and global cultures, published 'Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector,' intended to foster a broader conversation about the language employed in museums and other public institutions.³² In addition, recent scholarship demonstrating that the Dutch military engaged in systemic, structural violence during the period of 1945–1949 has led to a semantic shift of sorts.³³ The euphemistic term 'police action' no longer serves as the default designation for the two targeted military campaigns waged by the Dutch army against the Republic of Indonesia in 1947 and 1948. Rather, we see the more frequent usage of terms such as 'decolonization war,' 'colonial war,' and 'Dutch-Indonesian war.'

Much work still remains to be done. In physical and virtual bookstores—including the Netherlands' largest online purveyor, bol.com—and in universities around the country, the old-fashioned (and obviously gendered) historical subfield of '*Vaderlandse geschiedenis*,' or 'Fatherlands history,' typically refers to the metropolitan Netherlands alone. Studies of Dutch imperial history and decolonization might be designated as 'colonial,' 'overseas,' or 'Asian/'regional,' with such nomenclature reinforcing the claim that the European Netherlands can be unshackled from its colonial past, as if the history of the Dutch empire and its overseas colonies existed in entirely different spheres. In both the public arena and in academia, the '*ja, maar...*' phraseology remains omnipresent, even if sometimes subtle or merely implied, thereby reinforcing a long-standing colonial narrative that emphasizes the Netherlands' exceptionality and incomparability. If we recognize and reject this '*ja, maar...*' construction; if we remain cognizant of the power of words, we may take one small step towards creating a more normalized, more comparable, and certainly more nuanced history of Dutch imperialism and decolonization.

Acknowledgements This essay is based on the author's paper and talk delivered at the 'Visions of Empire in Dutch History' conference, held in Leiden, the Netherlands, on September 29–30, 2016. I have also incorporated into this piece other participants' papers, audience commentary and questions, and topical discussions that occurred over the course of this two-day international conference focusing on both early modern and modern Dutch imperialism. I would like to thank conference organizers (and this volume's editors) Anne-Isabelle Richard, René Koekkoek, and Arthur Weststeijn for their thoughtful commentary as well as Martijn Eickhoff and Jeroen Kemperman for their insightful responses to some of the claims I have raised in this piece.

NOTES

1. Remco Raben, 'A New Dutch Imperial History: Perambulations in a Prospective Field,' *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 128, no. 1 (2013): 5–30, with these particular quotations on 5, 8, and 25.
2. So, for instance, in a work first published in 1994, Dutch scholar J.A.A. van Doorn proclaimed that American and Australian historians especially have demonstrated an "insufficient recognition of the problematic aspects of the Indocentric perspective" and are therefore incapable of understanding, and writing about, Dutch imperial history: *De laatste eeuw van Indië: ontwikkeling en ondergang van een koloniaal project* (Amsterdam: Ooievaar, 1996 reprint), 14. Such exclusionary attitudes figure prominently in Joost Coté's, 'Strangers in the House: Dutch Historiography and Anglophone trespassers,' *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 43, no. 1 (2009): 75–94. A more recent exchange on this subject has been hosted by the Imperial and Global Forum at the University of Exeter: Paul Doolan, "Decolonizing Dutch History," published on November 16, 2016, and the subsequent responses by Sadiah Boonstra, Caroline Drieënhuizen and Doolan appearing under the title "Rewriting Dutch Colonial Histories." <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/tag/dutch-imperialism/>.
3. See for instance, two especially problematic essays contained in a special edition of *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* devoted to "The International Relevance of Dutch History": Wim van den Doel, "The Dutch Empire: An Essential Part of World History"; and Ido de Haan, 'Imperialism, Colonialism and Genocide: The Dutch Case for an International History of the Holocaust,' in *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 125, nos. 2–3 (2010): 179–208, 301–327, respectively. Despite their goals of situating modern Dutch history as part of "major, worldwide historical processes" (Van den Doel, 179), neither piece moves beyond superficial description into the realm of substantive analysis.

4. Susan Legêne, ‘The European Character of the Intellectual History of Dutch Empire,’ *BMGN Low Countries Historical Review* 32, no. 2 (2017): 110–120.
5. Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe After Empire: Decolonization, Society, and Culture* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 9, 13–14. Contrast this work with two other comparative texts, Martin Thomas, Bob Moore, and L.J. Butler, *Crises of Empires: Decolonization and Europe’s Imperial States, 1918–1975* (London: Hodder Education, 2008); and Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and Its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires* (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), both of which demonstrate the more traditional “add-on” approach to imperial comparison. In their text, Thomas, Moore, and Butler seek to redress the imbalance between (English-language) scholarship on the British and other empires, and, in the process, disprove a continued “British tendency towards ‘exceptionalism’” especially evident in studies of decolonization (1, 11). Similarly, Shipway’s text—aiming for “depth rather than breadth of coverage”—explores selected case studies drawn from the formal empires of “the four major European colonial powers: Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium” (14–15).
6. Buettner, *Europe After Empire*, 4, 6, 498.
7. Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 5–7, 22–25, 71–73, 84. For further discussion of these and other themes, see also the collection of topical essays entitled *Dutch Racism*, ed. Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), especially the editors’ introductory piece, “Innocence, Smug Ignorance, Resentment: An Introduction to Dutch Racism” (9–29), which frames this exceptionalism as moral and cultural superiority.
8. Larissa Schulte Nordholt and Remco Raben, ‘Principes? Niet overzee,’ *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 6 February 2019-uit. nr. 6, accessible at: <https://www.groene.nl/artikel/principes-niet-overzee>.
9. See for example, Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997) and Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, Cornell Studies in Comparative History Reissue, with a New Preface (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2015, originally published in 1989).
10. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, *Ethisiek in fragmenten; Vijf studies over koloniaal denken en doen van Nederlanders in de Indonesische archipel* (Utrecht: HES, 1981); Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben, ‘Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890–1950,’ and Berteke Waaldijk and Susan Legêne,

- ‘Ethische politiek in Nederland: Cultureel burgerschap tussen overheersing, opvoeding en afscheid,’ both in *Het Koloniale Beschavingsoffensief: Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië 1890–1950*, ed. Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2009), 7–24 and 187–216, respectively.
11. Frances Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies, 1900–1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 43–45.
 12. Ethan Mark, talk delivered at the conclusion of the “War and Decolonization in Netherlands-Indies/Indonesia” conference held at the Bronbeek Museum in Arnhem, the Netherlands, on November 3, 2017. Euroclio, the European Association of History Educators, has made available his talk as “Teaching the Ends of Empire.” <https://euroclio.eu/voice/teaching-ends-empires/>.
 13. Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, ‘Dutch Expansion in the Indonesian Archipelago Around 1900 and the Imperialism Debate,’ *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 25, no. 1 (March 1994): 106–107.
 14. Willem Frijhoff, ‘The Relevance of Dutch History, or: Much in Little? Reflections on the Practice of History in the Netherlands,’ *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 125, nos. 2–3 (2010): 7–44, with this discussion of the Netherlands as “moral compass” appearing on 13.
 15. J.S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of a Plural Economy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1944), xv–xvi. This reprint of the 1939 version contains an Introduction by Jonkheer Mr. A.C.D. De Graeff, Governor General of Netherlands India from 1926 to 1931. In a different vein, J.W.B. Money’s, *Java; or How to Manage a Colony* (London: Hurst and Blackett, Publishers, 1861) lauds the (highly exploitative) “cultivation system” of the nineteenth century as a potential model for post-Mutiny British India.
 16. For a concise overview of some recent work to these ends, see René Koekkoek, Anne-Isabelle Richard Arthur Weststeijn, ‘Visions of Dutch Empire: Towards a Long-Term Global Perspective,’ *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 132, no. 2 (2017): 79–96. Historical analyses foregrounding the interconnectedness of metropole and colony include Jennifer L. Foray, *Visions of Empire in the Nazi-Occupied Netherlands* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Vincent Kuitenhout, ‘Songs of an Imperial Underdog: Imperialism and Popular Culture in the Netherlands, 1870–1960,’ in *European Empires and the People: Popular Responses to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Italy*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2011), 90–123; and Gert Oostindie, *Postkoloniaal Nederland: Vijfenzestig jaar vergeten*,

- herdenken, verdringen* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2010); published in English translation in 2011 as *Postcolonial Netherlands: Sixty-Five Years of Forgetting, Commemorating, Silencing*; and Ulbe Bosma, *Terug uit de Koloniën* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2009). See too, the 2013 special issue of *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* entitled ‘A New Dutch Imperial History: Connecting Dutch and Overseas Pasts’ (128, no. 1 guest eds. Marieke Bloembergen and Vincent Kuitenhoud). Detailed analyses of the ways in which Dutch colonialism (and decolonization) manifest themselves in the Netherlands and its former colonial territories include Gloria Wekker’s *White Innocence*, discussed above; and Anne-Lot Hoek’s two-part article entitled “Rengat, 1949 (Part 1)” and “Rengat, 1949 (Part 2),” published by *Inside Indonesia* on September 12, 2016. A shorter Dutch-language version of the latter appeared in the Dutch daily newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* on September 16, 2016. See also the many significant contributions of Susan Legène and Lizzy van Leeuwen, including van Leeuwen, ‘Gordelroos van smaragd,’ *De Groene Amsterdammer*, October 19, 2016; Legène and Martijn Eickhoff, ‘Postwar Europe and the Colonial Past in Photographs,’ in *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, ed. Ann Rigney and Chiara de Cesari (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 287–312; Legène, *Spiegelreflex: Cultural sporen van de koloniale ervaring* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2010); Legène, “Impressed Images/Expressed Experiences: The Historical Imagination of Politics,” in *Free Access to the Past: Romanticism, Cultural Heritage and the Nation*, ed. L. Jensen, J. Leerssen, and M. Mathijsen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 291–315; and van Leeuwen, *Ons Indische Erfgoed: Zestig jaar strijd om cultuur en identiteit* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2008).
17. See for instance, Kris Alexanderson’s *Subversive Seas: Anticolonial Networks Across the Twentieth Century Dutch Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
 18. Wim van den Doel, ‘The Dutch Empire: An Essential Part of World History,’ 181.
 19. H.J. van Mook, Former Lieutenant Governor-General of Indonesia [this descriptor appears in his author attribution/title], *The Stakes of Democracy in South-East Asia* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1950), 206–208 and 245–248.
 20. The exhibition panels and all other written materials accompanying the exhibition, including the publicity brochure, were printed in both Dutch and English. Unless otherwise noted, I am using the English-language wording supplied by the exhibition’s curators. The exhibition description remains accessible on the museum’s website: <https://www.verzetsmuseum.org/museum/nl/de-koloniale-oorlog>

- and <https://www.verzetsmuseum.org/museum/nl/exposities/voorbij/de-koloniale-oorlog-1945-1949-gewenst-en-ongewenst-beeld>.
21. This commentary appeared in the Dutch-language version of the publicity brochure for the exhibit (description of events under the heading “Luister en praat mee!”), and the translation into English is mine.
 22. I attended this panel discussion and took notes during the event; my commentary here is based upon my recollection of this discussion as well as these written notes. Interestingly, when I spoke about this panel discussion during my presentation at the September 2016 “Visions of Dutch Empire” conference, one of my fellow presenters (who had not attended the museum’s panel discussion in question) observed that Louis Zweers, one of the panelists, was not a “real historian,” the implication being that his comments did not represent larger historiographical trends. Neither is true. Zweers is a historian of photography and media, and he has written a book examining how various Dutch information agencies censored and restricted the publication of material and imagery they deemed to be critical of the Dutch military’s actions in Indonesia. Further, my colleague’s objection was tangential to the point I had been making: namely, in the Netherlands, both academic histories and popular accounts of Indonesian decolonization continue to portray the Dutch case as exceptional or at least too dissimilar to events in other European empires as to invite comparison.
 23. Martien Hoogland, ‘Nederland moet het optreden in Nederlands-Indië in historisch perspectief plaatsen,’ *HP/De Tijd*, May 3, 2017: <https://www.hpdetijd.nl/2017-05-03/schuldvraag-nederlands-indie/>. See too, writer and researcher Ronald Nijboer’s critical response, published the following day, which accuses Hoogland of trivializing Dutch colonialism and decolonization by means of these flawed comparisons: *HP/De Tijd*, May 4, 2017: <https://www.hpdetijd.nl/2017-05-04/bagatalliseren-nederlands-indie/>.
 24. Over the course of 2017, a group of Dutch historians combed through military reports and other archival materials to compile, for the first time, a reliable, verifiable number of Indonesian casualties. When they publicized their findings, they emphasized that their assessment of 97,421 total deaths (including both civilian and military casualties) should be considered the lower limit of the death toll, not a final assessment, and that further research is needed. Further, they explicitly note that these numbers include only those killed by Dutch troops and do not include those victims of internal Indonesian conflicts and in-fighting: Christiaan Harinck, Nico van Hoorn, and Bart Luttkhuis, ‘Onze vergeten slachtoffers: Wie telt de Indonesische doden?’ *De Groene Amsterdammer*, July 26, 2017, with the downloadable table delineating

- their findings and sources available at: <http://www.kitlv.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Overzicht-doden-versie-14-juli-2017.pdf>. The rather unfortunately-titled English-language version of their article was published by the Imperial and Global Forum at the University of Exeter: "Do the Indonesians count? Calculating the number of Indonesian victims during the Dutch-Indonesian decolonization war, 1945–1949," August 14, 2017: <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/2017/08/14/do-the-indonesians-count-calculating-the-number-of-indonesian-victims-during-the-dutch-indonesian-decolonization-war-1945-1949/>.
25. Gert Oostindie, Ireen Hoogenboom, and Jonathan Verwey, 'The Decolonization War in Indonesia, 1945–1949: War Crimes in Dutch veterans' Egodocuments,' *War in History* 25, no. 2 (April 2018): 254–276; here, page 258. This article is based upon these scholars' full-length book, *Soldaat in Indonesië: Getuigenissen van een oorlog aan de verkeerde kant van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2015).
 26. Oostindie, Hoogenboom, and Verwey, 'The Decolonization War in Indonesia,' 256.
 27. This is the wording used in both the Dutch and English sections of the bilingual brochure used to publicize the Verzetsmuseum Amsterdam's temporary exhibition.
 28. "Propaganda van de Republiek" panel text made available at: <https://www.verzetsmuseum.org/museum/nl/de-koloniale-oorlog/propaganda-van-de-republiek>. My commentary here also reflects an earlier discussion with Martijn Eickhoff concerning the moral, political, and intellectual implications of the exhibition's inclusion of Indonesian perspectives.
 29. Written by members of this newer generation of scholars, the following pieces track some of these shifts and the type of work seen in recent years: Hoek, "Rengat, 1949 (Part 1)" and "Rengat, 1949 (Part 2)"; Koekkoek, Richard, and Weststeijn, 'Visions of Dutch Empire: Towards a Long-Term Global Perspective'; and the "Decolonizing Dutch History" discussion hosted by the Imperial and Global Forum at the University of Exeter, most notably, Sadiah Boonstra and Caroline Drieënhuizen's 'Rewriting Dutch Colonies,' published on December 5, 2016. <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/2016/12/05/rewriting-dutch-colonial-histories>.
 30. An English-language summary appears on the research program's (trilingual) website: <https://www.ind45-50.org/en/about-programme>.
 31. In making these claims about the signal importance of language, I argue that the boundaries between past and present are often porous and imprecise, as evident, for instance, in the ways that people continue to use certain words uncritically and even habitually. I do not ascribe to

the view that our study of history should be free of contemporary theories, tools, and moralities, as has been suggested recently by a number of Dutch historians who caution against the intrusion of presentist concerns and political agendas. See, for instance, Marco Visscher's interview with historian Piet Emmer, 'Zij die over ons slavernijverleden het hoogste word voeren, weten sterk te overdrijven,' *De Volkskrant*, January 6, 2018; Piet Emmer, 'De kijk op kolonisatie (door de eeuwen heen),' *Historiek*, January 9, 2018; and Maarten Manse, 'Examining Decolonization for Greater Understanding,' *The Jakarta Post*, January 23, 2018.

32. "Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector," a joint publication of the Tropenmuseum (Amsterdam), Museum Volkenkunde (Leiden), the Afrika Museum (Berg en Dal), and the Wereldmuseum (Rotterdam), available in both Dutch and English versions at: <http://materialculture.nl/en/words-matter>; and the June 28, 2018 program accompanying the publication's release. <http://materialculture.nl/en/events/words-matter>.
33. See especially, Remy Limpach, *De brandende kampongs van generaal Spoor* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2016).

PART II

Visions of Dutch Empire in Practice



CHAPTER 6

Institutional Memory in the Making of Dutch Colonial Culture in Asia (1700–1870)

Alicia F. Schrikker

On 10 June 1841, a man named Hadip Nasser approached D.F.H. Helbach, resident of Ternate (Maluku), in his office.¹ Nasser asked Helbach to mediate a conflict between his family and members of his community over the ownership of a Quran. Nasser claimed that the book had been in his family's possession since the death of his great-grandfather. Helbach decided that the family's claim of ownership was authentic and decided to return the Quran to the family; he also advised Nasser to keep the book in the mosque so that it remained accessible to both his family and the community.²

Helbach's *dagregister* (official diary) for 1841, which features a summary of this case, reveals his involvement in myriad activities in the legal, diplomatic, and religious spheres. Even in the time of the

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Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), colonial officials like Helbach operated much like autocrats in conjunction with local powerholders. Only around 1870, with the appointment of professional independent judges in regional courts, did the process of professionalisation of officialdom really take off.³ How did men like Helbach, who headed these offices and practised colonialism, make sense of what they were doing? Did these men who operated in the colonial field—administrators, church ministers, or governors—have shared ideas and norms about why they were there, and how they should operate? This chapter explores possible approaches to these questions, rather than providing definite answers regarding how Helbach and his contemporaries envisioned empire.

Until recently, the existing literature had little to offer students interested in the intellectual framework underpinning Dutch colonialism. David Armitage once described how, when he was compiling his *Theories of Empire* in the late 1990s, he had great difficulty finding suitable resources on the Dutch Empire. When he eventually contacted his Dutch colleagues, they responded saying: ‘Sorry, the Dutch had no ideas; they just counted. There is no secondary literature on the intellectual history of the Dutch empire.’⁴ This view echoed the age-old assumptions that the Dutch were pragmatic, adaptive, and largely influenced by financial concerns only—in contrast to all other colonial powers.⁵ Historians have advanced since Armitage was writing *Theories of Empire*, and done valuable work, in particular, on the seventeenth century. Martine van Ittersum and Peter Borschberg approached the work of the Dutch jurist Grotius through the lens of the imperial competition between the Dutch, Portuguese, and British in the seventeenth century. Arthur Weststeijn has shown that Dutch jurists and company directors reflected on classical Rome when setting up the East and West India Companies (WIC) in Asia and the Atlantic, respectively. Benjamin Schmidt and Michiel van Groesen have written about how Dutch activities in the Americas and in Asia were represented in the Netherlands in travel writing, art, and public debates. These researchers pay particular attention to how religions and peoples from around the world were represented in printed books, maps, and paintings during the heyday of early modern Dutch print culture. These images fed into Enlightenment intellectual debates about civilisational and racial hierarchies.⁶

Somehow, this new search for the intellectual history of the Dutch empire has limited its focus to the seventeenth century. Comparable

works on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are largely absent, and what exists does little to connect colonial cultures in the metropolis to local colonial practices and experiences.⁷ Some see the publication of Valentijn's *Oud En Nieuw Oostindien* in 1723 as the culmination of Dutch enlightened knowledge about Asia.⁸ However, we have no idea how this early canon of knowledge about the world beyond Western Europe was manifested in the worldview of Dutch colonial officials. We do know that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, debates and political thought on colonialism and the non-European world in the Iberian, French, and British empires were strongly informed by the Enlightenment and liberal rhetoric of progress. The absence of printed and eloquent intellectual reflections on colonialism and the empire in the Low Countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led an earlier generation of historians to conclude that there was no informed thought on colonialism. Even if at this point we know only little about the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imperial self-image of the Dutch, we do know that they were actively and increasingly *doing* colonialism, and consequently, building an empire. They were after all controlling port cities, waging constant warfare, setting up tax and labour extraction regimes, claiming jurisdiction over large regions in South and Southeast Asia, and mediating local disputes, as Helbach was doing in 1841. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may have been a period of decline, in the sense that the Dutch were losing key markets to British and other traders. However, in terms of territorial claims, this was a period of expansion and intensification of Dutch intervention in local societies in Cape Town, Ceylon, Java, and Maluku. The works of Legêne, Van Goor, and Gommans indicate that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was certainly more to colonial thought than mere pragmatic counting.⁹ They show in different ways that colonial officials—governors, judges, and church ministers—at times expressed their thoughts about the local society, their own work, and the choices they made in their work. Their research encourages a more structural approach to the evolution of Dutch colonial culture in Asia.

The *longue durée* intellectual history of Dutch colonialism was the theme of the conference on which this volume is based. The conference placed the intellectual history of the Dutch Empire on the agenda. But debates at the conference demonstrated that not everyone agreed

on what this intellectual history should look like and what the starting point should be, as we can read in the publication of the conference round-table. Should it adopt a history of political thought approach by focussing on canonical printed texts written by Dutch intellectuals, such as Grotius' *Mare Liberum* or Van Deventer's *Eereschuld*? In their position paper, Koekkoek, Richard, and Weststeijn proposed a transnational approach, which Susan Legêne emphasised further, arguing that narrow questions about specific Dutch visions reinforce the idea of Dutch exceptionalism rather than opening up the possibility of understanding theories of empire as transnational European products. Andrew Fitzmaurice, writing from the Anglo-Saxon perspective, makes a plea for contextualising the history of political thought, but without prioritising contexts over texts or vice versa.¹⁰

We could take a different approach to the history of ideas, consider the question: 'What did they think they were doing?' as a starting point and look for commonplace expressions used by colonial officials to explain their work in their writings. Colonial culture, defined by Lauren Benton as the 'assemblage of normative practices and ideas', could be the starting point of such research, instead of Dutch print culture.¹¹ This means shifting our focus from the more traditional history of political thought to an intellectual history for which colonial culture would be the basis. This, of course, is easier said than done. To locate the production of ideas and visions of empire in this colonial culture, we must return to the world of ordinary colonialism—the world of Nasser and Helbach. After all, colonial officials kept endless records—official diaries, monthly reports, and memoranda for their successors—to account for their actions and decisions. Ideas of empire can be studied through the colonial archives, if they are perceived not merely as accounts of occurrences but as expressions of accountability, knowledge production, and norm-making. To understand the norms and ideas underpinning these actions, we must enter the workplaces of the higher and middle strata of the colonial bureaucracy between 1700 and 1870 and analyse the writing produced therein.

This contribution thus argues for a new approach to the theme of visions of empire. First, it breaks away from historiographic traditions to view the VOC and the colonial period in Asia as absolutely different. Throughout the chapter, fragments from the VOC and colonial archives—produced locally in Asia in the process of performing colonialism—illustrate the historical embeddedness and hybridity of

colonial practice and ideas. Drawing on Ann Stoler's work,¹² I discuss how the seemingly contradicting concepts of pragmatism and progress became core values for Dutch colonialism. This dual worldview developed over time; the practice of, and the writing about, colonialism were rooted in the practices of the VOC as it evolved over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Second, drawing on a deep understanding of the vast locally produced archives and collections in Indonesia and the Netherlands, I propose a more structural approach to the history of ideas in practice.

The article unfolds as follows: in the subsequent paragraphs, I discuss how traditional periodisation has limited our understanding of the evolution of colonial thought as a long-term process, and I subsequently explain why it is essential to incorporate VOC and colonial archives in one study. Next, I illustrate how colonial pragmatism worked through a case study from the Kuta recruitment station in Bali in the 1820s, where the liberal concept of personal freedom was stretched beyond its limits in the name of pragmatism. By entering the colonial organisation, I illustrate how colonial officials at all levels were complicit in these acts of pragmatism. In the third part, I discuss how these same officials came to terms with situations where their work forced them to act beyond what they considered just, and how they justified their actions by alluding to a shared, though vaguely defined, worldview that was anchored in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. These two parts highlight the hybridity of knowledge production and colonial justification, given that colonial officials relied heavily on local intermediaries, while they were also influenced by literature produced in Europe that reflected on Asia. In the fourth part, I discuss the historical embeddedness of doing and thinking about colonialism within the colonial establishment. I show how the VOC archives had an afterlife as containers of 'truth' in the local administration; I use examples from Ternate from the time of Nasser and Helbach to discuss the intertextuality between VOC and colonial archives. The examples in this contribution are not exhaustive, but serve as a starting point for a more systematic analysis of the archives. Drawing from the anthropology of work, I finally argue that we can view the colonial culture of administrative record-keeping as institutional memory that carried its own traditions of knowing and sense-making through generations of officials. As such, these constituted visions of empire that radiated over time into the Dutch public spheres of politics, academia, and the church.

CHALLENGING TRADITIONAL PERIODISATION

One reason there are no studies on the long-term development of Dutch colonial culture lies in the persistent idea that the period 1795–1816 was a watershed moment in Dutch history in Asia and the Netherlands. Indeed, during this period, the Dutch colonial enterprise in Asia underwent profound constitutional and geographic changes, including the dismantling of the VOC, the Napoleonic Wars, the French occupation of the Netherlands, and the British occupation of Dutch ‘possessions’ overseas, such as Java, Maluku, Ceylon, and the Cape. Bosma and Raben aptly name this process ‘the contraction of empire’.¹³ In these areas, the Company had developed into a state-like entity. It carried territorial claims that included the mediation and execution of tax-farming and was executed through military and diplomatic operations and through Dutch-indigenous institutions like *landraden* and other civil courts.¹⁴ The early nineteenth century was characterised by political bickering over the future of the empire by colonial officials and politicians. The rhetoric of liberalism and Enlightenment played an important role in heated discussions over failures of the past and plans for the future of the Dutch colonial enterprise, as can be gathered from Koekkoek’s chapter in this volume.¹⁵

This traditional periodisation tends to mask continuities in Dutch colonial culture, making it impossible to reach a long-term understanding of how this culture evolved over time. Some colonial officials who arrived in the Indies might have distanced themselves from the VOC rhetorically, but in their actual daily work, they embodied legislative, executive, and judicial power from the start of the VOC period into the 1860s. In constitutional terms, the Dutch empire in Asia was established by 1816, with the proclamation of the *Regeringsreglement*.¹⁶ However, disagreements regarding the form of government and economic exploitation that had emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century, lingered until after the end of the Java War in 1830. By then, the colonial state had taken a company-like shape, with colonial labour extraction (*cultuurstelsel*) based on VOC practices; the Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappij (NHM) took over much of the VOC’s role in trading colonial products with the Netherlands on behalf of the state. In practice, just as in the time of the VOC, colonial rule was layered and unevenly distributed, and legal pluralism remained the norm.¹⁷

In Maluku and other areas in the Indonesian archipelago, there is little indication that inhabitants experienced the colonial period any differently from that of the VOC period. Well into the twentieth century, they continued to refer to the colonial government as ‘kompenie’. The same held true within the workplaces of those who were performing colonialism. The archives of different administrative stations across the archipelago (residency archives), nowadays kept in the ANRI, contain material from both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This local administration directly reflects the continuities between the VOC and colonial administrations up to the 1880s. In terms of the work activities of colonial officials, it makes sense to regard this period as a whole, despite geographic and constitutional disruptions: in the eighteenth century, taxation, law, war, and peace had become core businesses for VOC officials in Asia; trade remained their business in the Netherlands. The idea that the Dutch empire was solely concerned with commercial gain was an illusion from the start.¹⁸

Rather than focussing on constitutional and geographic changes per se, it is more productive to think about how global revolutions, the French occupation of the Low Countries, the British interregnum in Java, and the prolonged warfare and resistance in Java influenced how Dutch colonial officials perceived the world around them and themselves. At the same time, we must question to what extent these self-images and practices were rooted in an eighteenth-century colonial culture. These questions connect to recent studies in the field of the British and French empires. In his *Corporate character*, Eddy Kent takes a cultural approach to the British East India Company archives and shows how after the 1760s, an ideal image of company officials emerged—which resonated in literature and art that reflected on the empire and persisted beyond decolonisation. For the French empire, David Todd emphasises how the eighteenth-century Bourbon Empire continued to play a role in the reformulation of French imperial ambitions after 1814 through territorial claims, actors and memories. He sees this reformulation as a sinuous process, rather than a gradual transition.¹⁹

A VIEW FROM THE GROUND: PRAGMATIC CONCEPTIONS OF FREEDOM

How this intricate balance between continuity and change played out in practice is explained through an analysis of the immediate afterlife of the liberal ideals of individual freedom and abolition of slavery that the

British introduced in Indonesia. During the British interregnum, active measures were taken to abolish the slave trade and strengthen the individual freedom of the inhabitants of the archipelago. When the Dutch returned to power, many high administrators were impressed by these liberal standards. The Dutch took these ideas on board along with the abolition of the slave trade, but that is not where this story ends. The abolition of the slave trade forced the Dutch to think about what freedom and free choice meant in the Indonesian archipelago. As it turns out, however, there was little commitment to the idea of freedom in Dutch colonial practice, as the following anecdote illustrates:

In 1827 the Anna Paulowna had set sail from Banyuwangi to Surabaya. It carried eighty-five soldiers who had been recruited in Bali, besides the ship's crew and extra troops. Hours before they were to arrive in Surabaya, the Balinese men attempted to take over control of the ship, the ship's captain responded quickly to this act of mutiny and had his crew take up arms and shot fifty-four men dead, while ten jumped overboard.²⁰

This tragedy was long forgotten and never made it into the annals of colonial history. As we will see, the mutiny was the soldiers' ultimate act of resistance against forced recruitment and deportation from Bali. The sad incident stands in stark contrast to the original order, issued a year earlier—to recruit 600 soldiers in Bali. The government in Batavia had expressly stipulated that conscription had to be voluntary and out of free will, to avoid any suspicion that the government was violating its own laws by trading slaves in Bali. But the Dutch already had a long history of removing people forcibly from Bali to work for them. The VOC never established a factory in Bali, but nonetheless, it engaged in trading humans on the island via Chinese and other middlemen who negotiated the slave trade with local rajas. Slaves bought in Bali were mainly those who were in debt or had been convicted as criminals—this proved to be a continuous source of labour throughout the VOC's history.²¹ After the VOC's bankruptcy, this practice continued. So, in the early nineteenth century, when Daendels wanted slaves to work on his defence works in Java, he turned to Bali. After the British interregnum, the Dutch sent a mission to Bali to procure slaves. At this point, the Dutch were not the only traders interested in deporting men, women, and children from the island. In the early nineteenth century, French, Chinese, and Buginese traders easily found their way there as well. So in the early 1820s, when

there was a need for military recruits, turning to Bali was simply a colonial reflex founded in historical practice.²²

The mission had been prepared in the preceding years by Pangeran Sayyid Hasan Al-Habashi,²³ who worked as an agent for the colonial state and had developed a good relationship with the raja of Badung. Pangeran Sayyid had been explicitly instructed that all recruits had to conscript out of their own free will and that the king of Badung was to be paid only a small fee per recruit in return for his cooperation. The voluntary conscription initially promised a salary to the recruits and freedom of movement. They were to be dressed as soldiers and not chained. This proved impossible: as French and Chinese traders recruiting slaves from the same pool of men were paying high prices, Pangeran Sayyid concluded that the only way to complete his mission was to pay the king of Badung similar prices per recruit. Eventually, the Dutch government allowed Pangeran Sayyid to pay the king a higher fee per recruit. Thus, the recruitment of soldiers financially resembled the slave trade, but the idea of free will remained in that the recruits were to receive a salary.²⁴ The Bali residency archives contain the letters Pangeran Sayyid wrote in Jawi, with Dutch translations. The letters express his frustration over the impossibility of the mission, which the Anna Paulowna mutiny then confirmed.²⁵

A year later, government commissioner Pierre Dubois arrived, at what was to be a permanent recruitment station. Dubois was instructed to operate under the same impossible conditions, and like Pangeran Sayyid, he wrote extensively about the problems he encountered. If we were to visit his workplace as contemporary observers, we might find him writing or seated on his veranda discussing the progress of the recruitment with Jan Housing, the Chinese *shahbandar* (harbour master), who was well versed in Malay and Balinese and might have provided him with information on Balinese society.²⁶ Outside, we might hear the anxious voices of about 10–30 men between the ages of 17 and 25 years, and if we walked to the newly built recruitment barracks, we would find them chained, like slaves, waiting to be shipped to Java. Like his predecessor, Dubois had been given the express instruction that men had to be recruited out of free will, but nothing suggests that the men recruited during Dubois' term conscripted voluntarily. By this time, the salary advance of five guilders that was to be given to each recruit was being given to the middlemen who brought the recruits to Dubois' office. It led Dubois to exclaim in one of his letters that what he was really doing

was trading slaves and that this was certainly how the Balinese perceived his work. Dubois describes how the men tried to escape with the help of their family, and how he gave the men opium to keep them pacified when bringing them on board to be shipped to Java.²⁷ The soldier's costume (trousers, jacket, hat, and tie) was the only thing that distinguished these men from ordinary slaves. These clothes were the only indication of the formal free status they gained by being recruited. Apparently, for Dubois's superiors, this outward appearance of freedom was good enough.

By stepping into Dubois' workplace, we get a solemn idea of how the practice of colonial culture by the Dutch was defined by a disregard for local and corporate norms. The history of the Kuta recruitment station is unique, because we can see how these norms shifted with the consent of superior government officials, through the exchange of letters and instructions. Instructions were consciously ambiguous, for example when the government instructed Dubois in August 1828 to do his best to convince the rajas to stop the slave trade. However if that would not work, he was allowed to pay the market price of 25 Spanish reals per recruit to compete with the French and Chinese slave traders.²⁸ First, recruiters paid the market price for slaves to the raja of Badung for each recruit, the recruits' salary advances were given to the middlemen, and finally, the recruits were kept chained in the warehouse. All this was done with the consent of Dubois' superiors. There is no doubt that they were forcibly recruiting people as slaves, and government officials at all levels were complicit in this 'act of commercial pragmatism'. The history of the Kuta recruitment station in Bali in the late 1820s illustrates just how historically embedded Dutch colonial practice was.

CULTURES OF WRITING IN COLONIALISM

Years later, Dubois wrote an ethnographic account of Balinese society, based on his years working in Kuta. His writings have attracted the attention of anthropologists and historians like Helen Creese, who made these ethnographic accounts available in a recent publication.²⁹ In the introductory chapters, she carefully analyses his writings and contextualises them. She argues that the ethnographic accounts are unique because they are the earliest comprehensive accounts of Bali, and include insights into its courtly culture, religion, and customary laws. She sees his writings as a typical product of the Enlightenment because of how he maps

Balinese society through categories such as politics, economy, law, and religion. This systematised ordering of information about Bali led him to claim that Bali was a barbaric society that stood low on the ‘ladder of civilisation’. Creese points out that this line of reasoning is typical of how Enlightenment authors of the eighteenth century wrote about societies outside Europe; she reveals a degree of intertextuality with the work of Voltaire in Dubois’ discussion of Balinese Brahmanic texts.³⁰ Furthermore, she connects Dubois’ writings to a preceding tradition of writing about Indonesian society—consisting of the work of John Crawfurd, Thomas Stamford Raffles, and William Marsden—that is generally considered a product of liberal Enlightenment.³¹ Finally, she also makes visible the intertextuality between the writings of Dubois on Bali, and writings on Bali produced in the 1810s and 1820s by Dutch official Van der Broek and by the Malay author Abdullah bin Muhammad Al-Misri, who Pangeran Sayyid employed as a writer on his missions to Bali. Dubois was critical of these texts, but he nonetheless used and referred to them. We certainly know that his unnamed Balinese concubine helped him by translating and explaining local customs and perhaps Jan Housing or others working in service of the Badung court gave him the necessary information.³² Gathering information on Bali was a hybrid process, just as the practical work in Kuta had been; Dubois structured the information according to European expectations of the time. That Dubois was of French origin and wrote his ethnographic treatise in French rather than Dutch further emphasises the trans-European character of the colonial enterprise.

Ann Stoler, writing on the nineteenth-century colonial state archives, illustrates in different ways how the archives reveal categories of colonial thought. In a recent essay on Enlightenment and the empire, Stoler explains that we should not take colonial reasoning at face value. She argues that nineteenth-century colonial officials were not rational employees produced by the age of Enlightenment. Instead, society-state interactions were often intuitive and emotional, and Enlightenment political theory served to justify actions in hindsight rather than to inform them.³³ It is not difficult to imagine that Dubois’ depiction of Bali as a ‘barbarous society living in the past’ served him by helping to justify the slave trade in which he had been involved while in Kuta. Surely, Stoler is correct in advocating a critical approach to the knowledge production in the archives, but there must be more to the justifications we uncover in the archives than a mere disguise of colonial anxiety.

Uncovering such justifications in colonial archives could help us understand the values and norms that colonial officials shared about just rule. The inner relations among the history of ideas, archive production, and practical experience across space and time await critical assessment.

Thus, while the ethnographic information that Dubois collected is unique, it was shaped by traditions of writing about and studying other societies that had developed in Europe in the eighteenth century, while simultaneously building on existing knowledge that had been passed on in colonial offices. In an earlier study on the Dutch administrative culture in Sri Lanka, I worked on a set of regional *Memories van Overgave* written by VOC officials in Sri Lanka in the last decades of the eighteenth century. This particular genre of colonial records was written by officials to simultaneously inform successors about the practicalities of rule, and convince superiors of their own capacities. I have shown that in these instances, the authors were influenced by European Enlightenment canonical texts and ways of thinking—the *Encyclopedie des Deux Indes* by L'Abbé Raynal is one such example. More broadly, these colonial officials appear to have been guided by physiocratic ideas in their definitions of rural economic intervention in Sri Lanka, while ideas about race and civilisational development ruled how they depicted the local society and legitimised their own positions therein.³⁴

In a way, Dubois' worldview appears to have been founded in the same eighteenth-century European Enlightenment canon as that of late eighteenth-century VOC officials in Sri Lanka. They shared ideas about civilisational development, the rule of law, and progress, which influenced how they informed their colleagues about the local society, their self-image, and how they justified their work. Writing memoires and political-economic treatises in office to inform successors and fellow officials were a common practice throughout the VOC empire that continued into the colonial era. The archives contain a large number of these types of documents; together, they lend themselves well to a long-term analysis of colonial culture.³⁵ They encourage an approach that integrates the study of colonial culture (and thus, intellectual history in practice) in the VOC as well as in the colonial state. However, as explained earlier, there are few historians who cross this formal organisational divide. Furthermore, we need to think about the long-term effect of this knowledge and norm production in situ. Creese, for instance, shows how, via other colonial officials, various copies of Dubois' manuscript ended up in collections in the Netherlands and Indonesia. More in general

copies of the type of manuscripts discussed above found their way into archives of politicians and academics in the Netherlands and were sometimes reprinted in colonial journals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this way the reports had an afterlife in which they informed policy decisions and public and academic conceptions of colonialism and Indonesian society.

HISTORICAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF DUTCH COLONIALISM

The life and work of Dubois in the colonial office reveal the historical embeddedness of colonial thought and action within the colonial organisation. The VOC archives had an afterlife as institutional memory that informed men in the nineteenth century about how to write, think, and act while at work. In the archives we find direct traces of this cross-temporal relationship between policy, thought, and action. Through them, ideas and practices became anchored in the Dutch official mind. The nineteenth-century officials used and read these archives, and often, knowledge from VOC archives was reproduced and found its way into the colonial period in practice and writing.

Elsewhere, I have discussed how, in nineteenth-century court cases, references to VOC legislation continue to be found.³⁶ In 1824, Bien, an enslaved woman of around 20 years living in Ternate, ran away from her owners Isahak (or Baba Bjaab as his friends and relatives called him) and Njonja Tenga after they had heavily abused her. The verdict referred to Batavian statutes from 1642, which included a slave code, and quoted article no. 11 of the slave code. The court used this article in her favour to grant her freedom and punish her owners.³⁷ Recently, Sanne Ravensbergen has shown how colonial legal courts that were set up in the nineteenth century, especially the *landraden*, were built on earlier structures and ideas about the rule of law. So, while the procedures and workings of these courts surely underwent changes over time, the insecurity and patchwork nature of the courts remained constant. Practices and presumptions about the nature of society continued, changing only gradually. Ravensbergen showed that until 1870, the judges in these courts continued to be colonial officials who also performed executive power and the court's legitimacy derived from its cooperation with indigenous power holders, the *regenten*, *jaksas*, and *penghulus*, even if the distribution of power was slowly changing in favour of the Javanese regents and Dutch *residenten*.³⁸

The VOC's legacy can thus be found in the rule of law and the institutional set up of the colonial state; and in a more mundane sense, the VOC archives were important to colonial officials on the spot. The officials preserved and consulted these archives as sources of information and truth and as guides of how to navigate the local society. In the same year when Hadip Nasser sought mediation by Helbach for his family conflict, a double disaster hit the island of Ternate. First, the Gamalama volcano erupted, and two weeks later, an earthquake followed by three weeks of heavy aftershocks rocked the island. During these three weeks, panic reigned and Ternate's sultan and residents had regular discussions about what to do. Towards the end of the three weeks, the Dutch considered abandoning the island, but the sultan insisted on staying. During these discussions, Dutch administrators went through the VOC archives to seek out previous experiences with earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, and an account from 1773 when an eruption likewise coincided with an earthquake was used for risk assessment. Elsewhere, I have analysed how this moment of historical reflection evoked opposite responses from the sultan and resident. But the point here is that VOC records were still kept in the offices of administrators. They were used as institutional memory and provided the information that formed the basis of considerations about impending action.³⁹ We also know that in the late nineteenth-century colonial officials in training consulted Francois Valentijn's work as a source on Indonesia and Dutch history there.

So while nineteenth-century administrators tended to publicly dismiss the VOC period as part of the *ancien régime* from which they felt they had progressed, they also saw the VOC archives as containers of 'truth', which included ideas about the nature of local society, and why the Dutch were there. Archival records justified historic claims and served as guidelines for obligations and responsibilities to which the Dutch had committed over time and which they had enforced on local society. In sum, the archives influenced the colonial self-image and guided administrative behaviour. Scholars of political thought might not find the internal justification for these practices very exciting, as there is little eloquent intellectual reasoning in them; however, they were written for a colonial audience and worked persuasively. When we look carefully at VOC and colonial archives, we see the production of history and ethnography—which was used to legitimise pragmatic action and, therefore, constituted colonial culture—at different levels in the organisation. As such, I argue

that between 1700 and 1870, colonial culture should be understood as a continuous, cumulative process that was largely shaped in the office, rather than in the libraries of political thinkers.

COLONIAL CULTURE AND ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY

So far, I have used the case study of the Kuta recruitment station and fragmentary examples from the VOC and colonial archives to build a case for an archival turn in the study of the long-term history of ideas in colonialism. But how should we set about doing this, and is there any indication apart from the fragmented evidence presented here that such an approach would be fruitful? Certainly, the idea of placing the archives at the centre of an analysis of colonial culture is not new.⁴⁰ Kent, for example, moved beyond traditional periodisation to show how motives that we tend to situate solely in twentieth-century literary representations of the British Empire in Asia actually have a deep discursive genealogy that reaches into eighteenth-century colonial archives. Kent's work shows that it is fruitful to take a long-term approach to the history of ideas in colonialism; here, I agree that understanding the colonial self-image is an important key to that history. While Kent aims to show how that self-image came to penetrate literature and the arts at home in Britain, I would like to understand how such a colonial self-image related to the act of doing colonialism. Is it possible to grasp how daily encounters between colonial officials like Helbach and colonial subjects like Hadip Nasser influenced colonial legitimation? In order to answer this question, we will need to dig deeper into the colonial organisation. While it is tempting to answer such a question at the individual level, it is essential to understand this development of colonial culture, or process of sense-making, not from an individual, but a collective perspective.

To that effect, I propose drawing inspiration from research on the anthropology of work, and more specifically, the field of 'organisational identity'. Organisational identity studies focus on how organisations define themselves and what they stand for in relation to internal and external stakeholders. Scholars involved in this discipline study how such self-definitions emerge and develop within an organisation.⁴¹ To understand the intellectual framework underpinning the empire, or the more basic question raised in the introduction—'What did colonial officials think they were doing?'—a focus on self-definition is relevant and useful. One of the most interesting studies in this field was conducted recently

by Charlotte Linde on a large insurance company in the American Midwest.⁴² She argues that organisations create narratives that give their employees a sense of purpose. This insurance company's narrative, she shows, encompasses visions of the company's past, present, and future. It gives meaning to what the organisation does and what its employees do. The narrative is embedded in the organisation's institutional memory, and it is passed on and reproduced by employees. Thus, the organisational identity is contained within this institutional memory.⁴³

The concept of organisational identity directs our focus to questions of purpose and collective sense-making. It inspires us to question whether we can distinguish underlying narratives of past, present, and future within the colonial enterprise. How did such narratives adapt to changing circumstances? How did these narratives intersect with visions of the empire as they developed over time in the metropolis? Institutional memory and collective sense-making must be placed at the core of research on colonial culture and then examined at different levels in the organisation. We might not be able to conduct such research through interviews as Linde did, but the culture of writing within the colonial organisation—the VOC and colonial governments—provides access to this institutional memory. In the preceding paragraphs, I have shown that the archives provide us with opportunities to do so, if we focus on genres of writing and fully understand the local discursive contexts in which they were produced.

Typical VOC genres of writing, such as *Memories van Overgave*, in which knowledge was transferred from one administrator to his successor and *dagregisters*, reappeared in the nineteenth century as administrative genres. Thus, the culture of writing and reporting seems to have changed less than we might think.⁴⁴ I have discussed how the memoirs are full of ethnographic, political, and economic details. Furthermore, they often contained visions about the company's past, how the author's predecessor ruled, the author's accomplishments, and advice for his successor. The *Memories van Overgave* allow us to see how knowledge and experience were passed on; the *dagregisters* allow us to assess how mundane work and interactions among colonial officials changed over time. Colonial behaviour was anchored in local society and in its own colonial past, but it was also informed by contemporary global ideas, as is evident in the references to Raynal and Voltaire in the writings of colonial officials. If we look at the archives in their own right, as institutional memory, and see how they were linked to knowledge production outside

the archives, we get a much better understanding of the collective official colonial mind. Approaching it like an organisational anthropologist, we would then do this at different levels within the colonial organisation, from the centre and the office of the governor general to different local offices, and even further, to institutions at the fringes. Good examples of the latter category would be the church and missionary offices, which have produced archival heritages in their own rights.⁴⁵

As I have paid little attention so far to the church as a colonial institute, the last point might require further explanation. From the beginning of the Dutch colonial enterprise, the church was an important component of Dutch rule. It functioned as a spiritual, educational, and legal body. The church councils in Maluku, Ceylon, and Batavia reported to the VOC, but also upheld separate correspondences with the classis in Amsterdam to keep it informed about local affairs. Church ministers were appointed separately, but otherwise there were considerable crossovers between members of the church councils and officials of the administration. The churches functioned within and alongside the colonial realm; in the Indonesian archipelago, they continued to do so during and after the Napoleonic Wars. Church reports and council minutes form two fascinating continuous sources throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We can, therefore, ask similar questions about how church ministers regarded their position in Asia in the past, present, and future. Church councils discussed daily matters on the spiritual development of their local members, and in the eighteenth century, there was internal criticism and doubt about methods of conversion and education. In this light, discussions about language and customs frequently appear in the minutes of church councils.⁴⁶ Furthermore, in Sri Lanka and Maluku, parishes were involved in more than mere preaching. Registration and mediating in family affairs were part of the colonial clergy's work and the related reports give insight into the daily activities of and around the churches. In the nineteenth century, missionaries found their way to the Indies in larger numbers; however, interactions between established colonial churches and new missions have been little studied, as have the new channels of information into the Netherlands that the missionaries produced to raise funds for their work.

In each case, we must work within the locality to understand how colonialism worked not just in practice, but also discursively. With pragmatism ruling supreme, we find that locally developed administrative practices and values transformed into what we recognise as 'Dutch

colonialism'. And so, in the eighteenth century, we find diverse cultures of record-keeping and local interactions that emerged over time. While certain practices faded during the nineteenth century, others continued well into the twentieth-century. But each expressed locally crystallised forms of governance that differed across regions. The history of Pierre Dubois shows that, if we want to understand visions of empire, we need to understand the discourse on local customs and practices, and the self-image of responsible rulers that was passed on to readers, as well as the actual work on the ground—here, local and Dutch norms were continuously stretched in the name of economic pragmatism and legitimised by the idea that local society was found at a stage of development different from societies in Europe that required different policies. It explains why, later in the nineteenth century, the Dutch criticised some of the effects of colonialism and pushed for ethical reform; however, they never seemed to understand the fundamental problem of their own position as colonial rulers pretending to be merchants.

CONCLUSION

This contribution advocates a new approach to Dutch colonialism, by examining the development of narratives of colonial legitimacy within the colonial organisation. It follows Koekkoek, Richard, and Weststeijn and it takes a longue durée approach that agrees with Legêne, in the sense that such ideas should not necessarily be understood as exclusively Dutch. The case of Pierre Dubois, a Frenchman, clearly illustrates this. In line with Fitzmaurice, I argue that we should place the interactions among ideas, practical experience, and the texts that were produced while doing colonialism at the centre of our analysis. The starting point would be the colonial workplace rather than the texts printed in the Low Countries or elsewhere in Europe. The VOC and colonial office archives, as products of colonial accountability and justification, offer ample possibilities of researching the longue durée history of ideas related to Dutch colonialism. Still, adopting this new approach is easier said than done. Therefore, this contribution is first and foremost concerned with what to look for in these immense archives and how to read the documents they contain.

In this article, I have argued that in order to think productively about the character and evolution of Dutch colonial thought, three persistent

historiographic barriers must be overcome. The first barrier is that of periodisation. The institutional history of Dutch colonialism in Asia has led to separate historiographies of the VOC period and that of the colonial state. Historians have seldom attempted to investigate connections between these two periods. Instead, I argue that the only way to understand the long-term development of Dutch colonial culture is by integrating the histories of the VOC and the colonial state, and consider how certain core values were transmitted from the eighteenth century into the nineteenth century and beyond. The way to achieve this is by using the colonial workplace as a point of departure. Second, we need to overcome the self-image of the Dutch as pragmatic merchants that led an earlier generation of scholars to conclude that there was no such thing as a Dutch ideology of colonialism. We should try to understand this self-proclaimed pragmatism not only as acts, but also as a core value of Dutch colonialism that was used to legitimise certain actions and led men in colonial service to transgress the moral values that they claimed to sustain publicly. Next, we need to move away from the idea that political thought about colonialism can only be studied through contemporary publications of (public) intellectuals. Instead, I argue that even if colonialism was not always openly debated, the texts produced in the process of performing colonialism transmitted experiences and ideas and legitimised their actions. When we look at the colonial working field through the eyes of an organisational anthropologist, we can highlight core values and ideas that shaped colonialism, which served as foundational narratives that legitimated Dutch colonialism. Such foundational narratives ossified over time and found their way to the metropolis, through history-making, politics, and religion.

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NOTES

1. Within the colonial administration the resident belonged to the higher government circles, he was in charge of residencies, or provinces. This function resembled that of the commandors and governors in the VOC period.
2. Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, Jakarta (ANRI), Ternate 174, dagjournaal D.F.H. Helbach 1841, journal entry 10 June.
3. See the chapter by Sanne Ravensbergen in this volume.
4. Martine van Ittersum and Jaap Jacobs, ‘Are We All Global Historians Now? An Interview with David Armitage,’ *Itinerario* 36, no. 2 (2012): 7–28.
5. A view that continues to be repeated in the work of Piet Emmer, *Het Zwart-Witdenken Voorbij. Een Bijdrage aan de Discussie over Kolonialisme, Slavernij en Migratie* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam, 2018), and to a lesser extent in Wim van den Doel, *Zo Ver de Wereld Strekt. De Geschiedenis van Nederland Overzee vanaf 1800* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2011). For earlier protagonists of this view see also Cees Fasseur, *Kultuurstelsel en Koloniale Baten. De Nederlandse Exploitatie van Java, 1840–1860* (Leiden: Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1978).
6. Michiel van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Martine van Ittersum, *Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595–1615* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); and Peter Borschberg, *Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese and Free Trade in the East Indies* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011). This observation is confirmed by other contributors to this volume, such as Weststeijn, Antunes and Schmidt.
7. Dineke Hondius, *Blackness in Western Europe: Racial Patterns of Paternalism and Exclusion* (New Brunswick: New Jersey Transaction Press, 2014); Angelie Sens, ‘Mensaap, Heiden, Slaaf’: Nederlandse Visies op de Wereld rond 1800 (Den Haag: SDU, 2001).
8. Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 545.
9. Jos Gommans, ‘South Asian Cosmopolitanism and the Dutch Microcosmos in Seventeenth-Century Cochin (Kerala),’ in *Exploring the Dutch Empire: Agents, Networks and Institutions, 1600–1800*, ed. Cáitia Antunes and Jos Gommans (London etc.: Bloomsbury, 2015), 3–27; Jur van Goor, *Prelude to Colonialism, the Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004); and Susan Legènre, *De Bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breugel. Japan, Java, Tripoli en Suriname in de Negentiende-eeuwse Nederlandse Cultuur van het Imperialisme* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 1998).

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15. Jur van Goor, *Prelude to Colonialism*; A.F. Schrikker, ‘Restoration in Java 1815–1830: A Review,’ *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 130, no. 4 (2015): 132–144; the next chapter by Koekkoek in this volume.
16. The Regeringsreglement formed the basis of the organization of the colonial state, it might translate best as ‘general regulation of government’.
17. Schrikker, ‘Restoration in Java 1815–1830.’
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19. Eddy Kent, *Corporate Character: Representing Imperial Power in British India, 1786–1901* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); David Todd, ‘A French Imperial Meridian, 1814–1870,’ *Past and Present* 210 (2011): 155–186.
20. ANRI Bali 66, letter from the resident of Besuki, 21 May 1827.
21. Alfons van der Kraan, ‘Bali: Slavery and Slave Trade,’ in *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid, with the assistance

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22. For the French slave trade in Bali and the transport to the Mascarenes, see Richard Allen, *European Slave Trading in the Indian Ocean, 1500–1850* (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2015).
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 24. ANRI Bali 66; see also Bali/Lombok 81 with instructions for the raja of Bali Badung about the recruitment, dates 18 October 1826.
 25. ANRI Bali 66 and Bali 3 for the Jawi letters containing Pangeran Sayyid's seal.
 26. Creese, *Bali in the Early Nineteenth Century*, 79, note 37.
 27. ANRI Bali/Lombok 82, letter 88, Dubois to the resident of Besuki and Banyuwangi, 30 September 1828. He describes the situation of the slave trade quite vividly and explains that once the transaction has been made, the slave traders have full power over these people, and the king no longer cares about them even if the traders beat the slaves to death, the king will not act. He continues to say that in fact the government's power over their recruits remains the same: 'wij hebben dezelfde regten, en hoezeer de kommissie moeite heeft gedaan om dat idee van slavernij in onze handen te doen verdwijnen, heeft het volk zulks nog in begrijp...?'
 28. ANRI Bali/Lombok 81, letter 88, Dubois to the resident of Besuki and Banyuwangi, 30 September 1828.
 29. Creese, *Bali in the Early Nineteenth Century*.
 30. Creese, *Bali in the Early Nineteenth Century*, 150–151 for Voltaire, and 160–163 for her general observations on the Enlightenment roots and moral reflections such as barbarity in his work.
 31. William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra: Containing an Account of the Government, Laws, Customs and Manners of the Native Inhabitants, with a Description of the Natural Productions, and a Relation of the Ancient Political State of That Island* (London, 1784); Thomas Stamford Raffles,

- The History of Java* (London, 1817); and John Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago: Containing an Account of the Manners, Art, Languages, Religions, Institutions, and Commerce of Its Inhabitants* (Edinburgh, 1820).
32. Creese, *Bali in the Early Nineteenth Century*, 152–153 on the writings of Van den Broek and Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Misr; 167–168 on his concubine and other possible informants.
 33. Stoler, ‘Reasons Aside: Reflections on Enlightenment and Empire.’
 34. A.F. Schrikker, *Dutch and British Colonial Intervention in Sri Lanka, 1780–1815* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), Chapters 4 and 5.
 35. Ibid.
 36. Schrikker, ‘Restoration in Java.’
 37. ANRI Ternate 170, 1824–26, ‘Proces papieren tusschen den fiskaal J.H. Otto A.O. Eisscher, contra de Makassar Isaak en zijne huisvrouw Njonja Tenga over mishandeling van een slavin genaamd Bien.’ For the Bataviase Statuten and the slave code see J.A. van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch plakaatboek, 1602–1811*, vol. 2.
 38. Sanne Ravensbergen, *Courtrooms of Conflict: Criminal Law, Local Elites and Legal Pluralities in Colonial Java* (PhD thesis, Leiden University, 2018).
 39. The sultan of Ternate in his diary-entry of the earthquake, mentions that the Dutch officials show him the old books from their archive. F.S.A. de Clerq, *Bijdragen tot de kennis der residentie Ternate* (Leiden: Brill, 1890), 202–223. For a Dutch account of that meeting, see ANRI Ternate 173, dagjournaal Helbach 1840; A.F. Schrikker, ‘Disaster Management and Colonialism in the Indonesian Archipelago, 1840–1920,’ in *Natural Hazards and Peoples in the Indian Ocean World: Bordering on Danger*, nr. 8, ed. G. Bankoff, and J. Christensen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 225–254.
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 41. Michael G. Pratt, Majken Schultz, Blake E. Ashforth, and Davide Ravasi, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
 42. Charlotte Linde, *Working the Past: Narrative and Institutional Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
 43. Ibid.

44. In contrast with the organization of the archives in the Netherlands. Charles Jeurgens, ‘Networks of Information: The Dutch East Indies,’ in *Exploring the Dutch Empire: Agents, Networks and Institutions, 1600–2000*, ed. C. Antunes and J. Gommans (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 95–130.
45. This research is currently conducted by two PhD students within the framework of the Institutional Memory project: Philip Post ‘Reproducing past, present and future: colonial visions and experience in Asia in the residencies’ and Alexander van der Meer, ‘Spirited Narratives of Purpose and Progress: Church-Society Engagement Alongside the (Company-) State’. For more information see: <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/humanities/institutional-memory-in-the-making-of-colonial-culture>.
46. Hendrik E. Niemeijer en Th. van den End, *Bronnen betreffende Kerk en School in de Gouvernementen Amboen, Ternate en Banda ten tijde van de VOC, 1605–1791* (Den Haag: Huygens ING, 2015).



CHAPTER 7

Envisioning the Dutch Imperial Nation-State in the Age of Revolutions

René Koekkoek

The late eighteenth-century transformation of the Dutch company-ruled trading empire into a state-ruled colonial empire was a turning point in the history of visions of the Dutch empire.¹ It coincided, although this is rarely emphasized, with the Dutch Republic's transformation of a union of seven 'United Provinces' into a centralized nation-state. In the second half of the 1790s, Dutch 'Batavian' revolutionaries abandoned the model of fragmented, decentralized sovereignty that had characterized early modern Dutch politics. Instead, they realized a new conception of political sovereignty, known in contemporary revolutionary parlance as 'one and indivisible' (*één en ondeelbaar*). This formal, constitutional foundation of a centralized Dutch state ruled by one supreme authority was complemented with a new model of imperial sovereignty. During the Batavian Revolution (1795–1801), the company-owned overseas territories and properties were redefined as 'possessions of the state' over which the state had political sovereignty. The Batavian Revolution laid the conceptual foundations of national *and* colonial state-building.²

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But what were these conceptual foundations? In what circumstances were they formulated? Historians of the nineteenth-century Dutch colonial empire have largely ignored the political ideas of the 1790s and early 1800s, save the obligatory reference to the clash between the ‘liberal’ critic of Dutch colonial policy, Dirk van Hogendorp, and the ‘conservative’ representative of the colonial establishment, S.C. Nederburgh. It is telling that the two most important studies on Dutch imperial political thought in the age of Atlantic revolutions date from the 1940s and 1970s.³ Subsequent generations of historians have shrugged off the actual content of ideas and debates concerning the empire during the revolutionary era. The tenor has been that Batavian revolutionaries ‘achieved little’, their ideas being dismissed as a ‘potpourri of progressive and conservative ideas’.⁴ In such renderings, the colonies simply ‘fell to’ the state.⁵ The realization of a new conception of imperial sovereignty vested in a centralized state has been assumed rather than explored.

This disregard for the political-theoretical underpinnings of the transformation of imperial sovereignty has been accompanied by somewhat one-dimensional postulations of the rise of abstract Enlightenment ideals concerning free trade, abolitionism, and ‘benevolent’ colonial rule. How to account for that fact that Batavian revolutionaries did not abolish slavery, did not open up free trade in every sector and area, and did not implement colonial policies based on the equal rights of man? It has been widely asserted that their Enlightenment ideals were either ‘inconsequential’ or ‘w wishy-washy’, that revolutionaries ‘failed to live up to their ideals’, or that, in the end, economic motives prevailed. Such evaluations, however, reek of anachronism and will help us little in understanding the relationship between ideas and this foundational constitutional moment.⁶

This chapter revisits the era of the Batavian Revolution as a key-moment in the history of Dutch imperial political thought. It argues that in terms of formal political organization, the conceptual and intellectual foundations of the nineteenth-century Dutch imperial state were laid during the Batavian Revolution. A crucial context for this foundational moment, I maintain, is the age of Atlantic, ‘imperial’ revolutions. Considering the various alternatives that were on the table, the dead ends, and the roads not taken, this chapter presents the years surrounding 1800 not as a moment when Dutch imperial history was ‘on hold’, but as a turning point that gave birth to a state-led colonial empire.

My contribution thereby proceeds from the intersection of three historiographical trends. First, over the past two decades the ‘Age of

‘Atlantic Revolutions’ has been studied not merely as an age of ‘democratic’ and ‘national’ revolutions, but increasingly as an age of ‘imperial’ revolutions. Atlantic revolutions did not necessarily or automatically lead to neatly defined nation-states.⁷ This observation applies to the Dutch Batavian Revolution too. The imperial dimensions of both the American and French revolutions were in this regard particularly instructive for Batavian revolutionaries. To them the British and French imperial policies represented failures, albeit of different sorts and leading to different outcomes. Putting these contexts centre stage enables us to better grasp the considerations and anxieties surrounding the formulation of new visions of the Dutch empire.⁸

A second, closely related topic that has received growing scholarly attention in recent decades is the major slave insurrection on the French-Caribbean island of Saint-Domingue that led to the first independent black American state Haiti, including its repercussions in the wider Atlantic world. To be sure, Batavian revolutionaries did not see a ‘Haitian Revolution’; they saw a *French* revolutionary regime struggling with a slave rebellion in the world’s most profitable plantation colony. Both within and outside the Batavian National Assembly references to this series of events, in particular to Frenchmen ‘prematurely’ applying the principle of the equal rights of man to enslaved people of African descent, were ubiquitous. Such interpretations reveal a deeply held conviction among even the most radical Batavian revolutionaries that enslaved Africans were (still) ‘unfit’ for the liberties and rights associated with citizenship due to their alleged backward stage of civilization.⁹ Such modes of reasoning came to be applied to the indigenous inhabitants of the East Indies too.¹⁰

Finally, in contrast to an older—and in my view mistaken—historiography that has painted the Dutch Batavian revolutionaries as ‘puppets’ of the French revolutionary republic, a spate of recent research on the Batavian Republic has demonstrated that Dutch revolutionaries could operate and debate in relative autonomy. During the period 1795–1798 a rich, and vibrant political debate took place among Batavian revolutionaries about what it means—and what it requires—to be(come) a modern, representative democratic republic within the framework of a centralized state.¹¹ Although the democratic-republican ideals proved to be short-lived, the framework of the centralized nation-state became permanent. Taking into account the Batavian redefinition of the Dutch empire,

however, points to an additional legacy: the framework of an ‘imperial nation-state’.¹²

Bringing these historiographical trends into dialogue with each other, this chapter sheds a new light on an underexplored key-moment in the history of visions of the Dutch empire. How was the Dutch empire envisioned during the era of the Batavian Revolution? What options were on the table? And what was the legacy of this revolutionary moment?

In what follows I will first sketch the precarious state of the Dutch empire in the closing decade of the eighteenth century. I then turn to the ‘Committee concerning the East Indian Trade and Possessions’ established in 1795 under the leadership of the democratic-republican revolutionary Samuel Wiselius. Despite this Committee’s cautious formulation of a constitutionally unified imperial realm, there was never an unqualified intention to apply the revolutionary principle of the equal rights of man to all—Dutch and non-Dutch—inhabitants of the imperial realm. The chapter goes on to discuss the next prominent Committee on colonial affairs established by the Batavian National Assembly in early 1797. Chaired by representative Jacob Hendrik Floh, this Committee produced a fundamental restatement of the nature of Dutch empire: the colonies were subordinate ‘possessions’ of the state bereft of the right of representation in the legislative body; they principally served to enhance the wealth and glory of the Dutch state; and they were to be ruled by state (civil) servants, not by company-employed merchants; the non-Dutch inhabitants of the colonies—enslaved or subjected by other (violent) means—were, notwithstanding some critical voices, generally seen as uncivilized and unfit to be entitled to the rights and liberties assigned to Dutch citizens. This model constituted not a ‘failure’ of ‘inconsequential’ ideals, but a conscious expression of a vision of empire that would have a lasting impact on nineteenth-century colonial state-building.

This chapter accordingly shows how ideas and visions were translated into imperial political frameworks. The imperial visions of these committees were subject to parliamentary deliberation and informed new constitutional settlements. They can be seen as bridging the realm of imperial ideas and the realm of imperial practices. At the same time, the larger context of Atlantic imperial revolutions and practices, warfare and insecurity, deeply affected the ways in which Dutch revolutionaries reimagined their empire.

A FRAGILE EMPIRE

The Dutch empire is in a ‘critical political situation’, national representative Herman Vitringa remarked in April 1797. His assessment was illustrative for the pessimistic mood among his colleagues who were plagued by a ‘fatal insecurity about what we have left or will have left of it’.¹³ Indeed, at the closing of the eighteenth century, the geopolitical prospects for new imperial blueprints grounded in revolutionary principles were grim. During the second half of the 1790s the fate of the entire Dutch empire trembled in the balance. After the invasion of the French-Batavian army in January 1795, the stadholder William V of Orange and his retinue fled to England. From Kew Palace, London, his place of exile, Willem V in his former capacities as captain-general of the Dutch army and director-general of the VOC ordered colonial authorities to temporarily take refuge under the protective wings of British forces against French intrusions. Dutch Guyana (Berbice, Demerara, Essequibo), Cape the Good Hope, and nearly all Indian and East Indian enclaves and settlements came under British rule. The island of Java, the VOC’s colonial stronghold in the East, as well as Suriname and the six tiny islands of both the Antilles remained in Batavian hands.¹⁴ The West-Indian (Antillean) possessions were only transferred to the British and the French in 1799–1800. Trade and communication between the revolutionary Batavian Republic and the colonies, furthermore, had virtually come to a standstill due to the superiority of a hostile British navy. For Batavian revolutionaries it was a sobering geopolitical reality-check; they were nearly powerless in the face of their mighty rivals.

Yet we should not lose sight of the genuine hope, cherished by many Dutch revolutionaries at the time, that both the East and West Indies could be made profitable again.¹⁵ Notwithstanding the commonplace of Dutch economic decline in the second half of the eighteenth century, Dutch overseas trade in the Atlantic world was quite successful and even growing until at least the early 1780s.¹⁶ Over the course of the eighteenth century, the slave-based plantation economy in Dutch Guyana and Suriname had grown significantly; the islands of Curacao and St. Eustatius had become thriving commercial hubs. Although the Dutch imperial presence in the Atlantic world was characterized by its decentralized nature, its entanglement with other Atlantic empires, and its role as ‘broker’ rather than expansionist imperialist, Batavian revolutionaries

envisioned the West-Indian possession as belonging to a Dutch imperial realm.¹⁷ In contrast to the East Indian possessions, the West Indian colonies were considered ‘agricultural settler colonies’ (*landbouwende volksplantingen*) whose (white Dutch) inhabitants were directly related to the motherland. The East Indian colonial possessions were rather referred to as ‘Establishments’ (*Etablissementen*) directed at the export of colonial products solely destined for the metropolitan market. Batavian revolutionaries were well aware that under the VOC profits had decreased, but in the preceding decades the overall volume of trade was still considerable. The question became how to reform this ‘unprofitable giant’.¹⁸

The bottom line is that at the outbreak of the revolution in 1795, many believed that Dutch overseas trade was not necessarily doomed. In late 1797, the Wiselius Committee considered the East and West Indian Possessions ‘the most powerful sinews of this State’.¹⁹ The question was how Dutch overseas trade could flourish again without chartered companies, and how the organization of the Dutch empire could be put on a new footing.

To appreciate the establishment of the Dutch state’s sovereignty over the colonies, it is worthwhile considering what kind of regime of imperial sovereignty it replaced. Following Philip J. Stern’s lead, several scholars of early modern Dutch imperial history have pointed out that just like the British East India Company (EIC) the Dutch United East India Company (VOC) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC) were never merely companies involved in trade. The VOC owned and administered territories; it constructed and manned fortifications, administered justice and imposed punishments through courts, drew up legislation, levied taxes, had a monopoly of violence (in certain areas), possessed and maintained military forces, regulated civic and religious life, entered into diplomatic alliances with foreign rulers, made treaties and declared war. These marks of sovereignty usually associated with states suggest that trading companies were institutions ‘between company and state’ or, in Stern’s terms, ‘company-states’. Instead of seeing early modern trading companies as either precursors of the modern multinational or as ‘anomalies’, that is to say, as ‘strange’ political-economical organizations that are hard to square with the nation-state, it has been convincingly argued that the hybrid nature of trading companies should be analysed on its own terms.²⁰ Trading companies such as the EIC or VOC, were ‘corporate body politics’ in a period when the supreme authority of the state

was not fully established. From this perspective, the political nature of trading companies was not abnormal. They belong to a multitude of corporate bodies (or corporations) that constituted early modern societies, such as guilds, cities, provincial estates, universities, domestic chambers of commerce and trade, ecclesiastical chapters and confraternities. Against this background, the state claiming supreme authority over colonies that were redefined as possessions of the state was part of a larger revolutionary effort to eradicate *ancien régime* forms of corporate sovereignty.²¹

FINDING A MIDDLE COURSE

The regime change following the invasion of French-Batavian armies in January 1795 was a fairly smooth affair; the major challenge was what kind of regime should replace the old one. The very foundations of a new political system were up for debate: the form of government, the structure of the state, and the nature of the sovereignty of the ‘people’. For who was ‘the people’? Was there a single Dutch ‘nation’ at all? This was no foregone conclusion given the age-old, traditional autonomy of the Dutch provinces. And what about the Dutch—and non-Dutch—habitants of the colonies? Were they also part of the sovereign nation? It took more than a year for Dutch revolutionaries to arrive at a consensus that a ‘national’ meeting of representatives should convene to decide on these matters in the first place.²²

On 1 March 1796, the prominent lawyer and author of the celebrated *Treatise on Equality*, Pieter Paulus, held his opening address as first chairman of the National Assembly in The Hague. Around the same time the revolutionary Batavian Republic was also entering uncharted imperial waters. On December 24, 1795, a few months before it would be replaced by the National Assembly as the country’s highest political body, the States General had decreed the dissolution of the VOC. The (second) WIC was already liquidated in 1792, its territories and assets placed under direct rule of the States General.²³ Although the VOC’s colonial patent was prolonged to 1798 (and again postponed to 1799), the company’s directors were deposed immediately, their tasks assumed by the newly formed ‘Committee concerning the East Indian Trade and Possessions’. It was up to them to begin rethinking the political and constitutional status of the overseas ‘possessions’.²⁴

The Committee consisted of 21 members: fiery democratic-republican as well as more moderate revolutionaries; some with experience or roots in the East, others without; even some former VOC directors were joined in.²⁵ The young and diligent Samuel Wiselius, who had risen to prominence as a principled Patriot publicist and who had played an active role in the regime change in both Amsterdam and the province of Holland, became the undisputed leader of the Committee. In December 1796, the Committee offered a first draft of articles to the Constitutional Reform Commission (chaired by Jacob Hahn) that was formed to review the first, heavily contested draft constitution (*Plan van constitutie*). This draft constitution was supposed to serve as a working document for the National Assembly's deliberations.²⁶ The accompanying report to the draft articles on the colonies, written by Wiselius, stated that 'those countries hitherto entitled Possessions and Colonies from now on must be considered *inseparable parts of the single and indivisible Republic*'. This formulation reveals the Committee's intention to transpose the principle of *één- en ondeelbaarheid* (unity and indivisibility), the political creed of those Batavian revolutionaries who desired a centralized nation-state, to the imperial realm. As a second basic principle the Committee's report proposed that 'everything that is just and fair here ought to be just and fair there, and consequently that everywhere throughout the Batavian Republic rights and duties are the same'.²⁷

Although a detailed exposition of constitutional stipulations was still missing, this proposal amounted to a sweeping revision of the political architecture of the empire. Such ideas did not come out of nowhere. Already in 1785, the (anonymous) author of a notorious pamphlet series in the form of fictitious letters between 'Aristodemus' and 'Sincerus', a work influenced by the writings of the French Abbé Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, advocated the principles that, first, colonies are 'parts' of the motherland, and second, that citizens in the colonies ought to remain full members of the political community of the motherland. Several years later, in 1792, exiled Patriots residing in revolutionary France proposed the destruction of the chartered companies and the introduction of a system of colonial representation in a legislative body in the motherland.²⁸ National representative Jacob Hahn, chair of the Constitutional Reform Committee, had likewise expressed in a letter to Wiselius and his colleagues his view that the Batavian Republic should drop the concept of colonies altogether; the overseas territories were to be regarded as 'members of the Dutch state'.²⁹ The Wiselius report, in short, expressed a line

of reasoning that had been articulated in various ways in the preceding decade.

The Wiselius report readily expressed its awareness that by proposing the political and constitutional unity of the empire they touched upon a ‘highly sensitive issue’. The recent turmoil in both the British and the French empires had left a deep impression. The British, on the one hand, had been unable to prevent rebellious American revolutionaries from founding a union of independent states. The revolutionary French, on the other hand, were unable to prevent a rebellious army of former slaves taking control of large parts of the island of Saint-Domingue.

The Dutch thus faced the predicament of finding a middle course between two undesirable options, the report suggested. Generally, Batavian revolutionaries supported the American declaration of independence as a legitimate political act. In their view British imperial policies towards the American colonists had been arbitrary, they had trodden their rights unlawfully. American rebels were therefore justified in taking up arms for the sake of an *anti-imperial* revolution. From a metropolitan point of view, the French Revolution represented a different challenge, one that resembled the situation of the Dutch themselves. In contrast to the British–American conflict, the French metropole itself was now engaged in revolution. The question became how the imperial realm should be updated according to the principles of the equal rights of man, popular sovereignty, and representative democracy. Inevitably, the ‘disaster’ of the French-Caribbean plantation colony Saint-Domingue, became the primary reference point for Dutch revolutionaries (as well as for numerous conservative Orangists).

What has come to be known as the Haitian Revolution was a highly complex series of events. With the outbreak of the French Revolution, Saint-Domingue’s French white planters seized the opportunity to demand representation in the metropole but were soon abhorred by any suggestion that revolutionary principles should apply to their slave society. Free Saint-Dominguan people of colour, in contrast, embraced the rhetoric of equality, rights, and citizenship and pushed for reform. The subsequent imperial policies coming from the French metropole were indecisive and highly ambiguous. The stakes were raised when enslaved people of African descent mounted a rebellion on the northern plain of the island in the Summer of 1791. Their uprising threatened to overthrow the entire system of slavery and endangered the exploitation model of the plantation colony. In order to prevent losing control, as

Spanish and British troops started to invade the island, French commissioners decided to promise formerly enslaved black rebels French citizenship if they would fight on their side. This decision, a mixture of idealism and opportunism, was confirmed by the French National Convention in February 1794.

The details and complexities, often even the basic chronology of events, were lost on most Dutchmen. For example, it was widely asserted that the war and anarchy on the island was caused by the French decision to abolish slavery (in fact, the rebellions of both coloured and black insurgents preceded this decision). The general perception was one of a French revolutionary regime naively applying a set of ideals to a far-off place widely different in terms of climate, soil, social structure, mentality, and mores. As the Wiselius report put it, the application of ‘high-minded philosophical principles’ without considering the particular circumstances of distant lands was a grave risk. But it was equally dangerous to continue the ‘arbitrariness’ of the pre-revolutionary era, thereby betraying the very principles upon which the revolution was based in the first place. The disastrous consequences of both imperial policies—the British and the French—were still ‘fresh on everyone’s memory’. In light of these imperial experiments, the report inserted the caveat that for the moment the rights and duties that in principle applied to the entire republican empire could justifiably be ‘determined, limited, and amended’ if the common good required such.³⁰ The intended constitutional ‘unity and indivisibility’ of the Dutch imperial realm, it turns out, was qualified from the very beginning.

After consideration of the Wiselius report, the Constitutional Revision Commission was internally too divided to arrive at a final decision about the constitutional articles concerning the colonies. The National Assembly hence decreed the formation of a new committee in February 1797. Chaired by representative Jacob Hendrik Floh, it finished a report in early April. On Saturday April 22, 1797, they presented the report (hereafter: Floh report), including a draft title for the colonies, to the National Assembly.³¹

THE FLOH REPORT

Although often ignored, the Floh report is arguably the most elaborate theoretical reflection on the nature of colonies produced in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic.³² It did not shy away from asking

four fundamental questions: what, actually, are colonies? For what purpose should they be protected and maintained? What are the relations between the motherland and her colonies? And finally, how should they be governed? To answer the first question—what are colonies?—the authors of the report took a short historical detour. Their concise history of the Dutch colonial enterprise commenced with the observation that it was not overpopulation (as in the colonies of antiquity) but the ‘spirit of commerce’ among ‘private individuals’ that had led to new discoveries and settlements in other parts of the world. The motherland, privileging certain private individuals with patents and charters, pledged to take the ‘newly discovered lands under her custody and protection’. This pledge required in turn that all commodities and agricultural produce were destined for the motherland. This reciprocal agreement, this ‘contract’, as the Floh report put it in typical revolutionary language, was the primary foundation of the establishment and conservation of the colonies. Based on this protection pledge and because the Republic had ‘planted her flag’ in these lands—‘a sign of property’—these new lands could be considered ‘possessions of the State’.

The Floh report’s language of ‘contract’ and ‘private individuals’ is revealing. It deliberately downplayed the collective nature of trading companies as corporate bodies. The revolutionary discourse of individuals who consent to a contract which guarantees their natural and civil rights did not allow for ‘intermediary’ corporate institutions. Colonies were hence defined as ‘those lands the state has taken possession of and has taken under its protection, so as to strengthen its commerce in Europe through the colony’s products or trade, and to provide its own market with a greater quantity of goods which can be traded or sold to other peoples, so as to defray the small quantity of products generated on its own European soil’. This was far from an elegant definition, but the message that colonial trade and commerce was a state affair was clear enough. Strengthening commerce, however, was not seen as a goal in itself. Rather, ‘the glory and wealth of all contemporary societies of Europe depend merely upon the quantity and extent of their commerce’. The answer to the second question, then, was that the state must protect his overseas colonies in order to pursue glory, retain its status among the leading trading nations, and secure the state’s wealth and independence.³³ The report was silent on the notion of benevolent colonial rule. In fact, the non-Dutch peoples inhabiting the colonial possessions were not mentioned at all.

Proceeding from this foundation, what are the relations between the motherland and the colony (question three)? Essentially, the Floh report restated the argument that the relationship between metropole and colony is governed by a ‘primitive, mutual contract based on consent’. The implications were twofold. On the one hand, ‘arbitrary rule’ is out of the question. The colonists ‘retain their natural and civil rights’ (in so far as they had not been renounced in the contract), thus placing limits on the state’s authority. The colonists, in their turn, could not unilaterally terminate this contract; that would amount to ‘open rebellion’. The report thus warned against the mistakes made by the British, while simultaneously seeking to eliminate any justifiable ground for colonial rebellion.

The Floh commission was careful to point out that since the VOC was formally still in existence (as a nationalized company), the notion of a ‘direct’ contractual relationship between colonists and the state did not yet apply to the East Indies. There the ‘contract’ was initially made between colonists and the VOC. Until the expiration of the VOC patent, the Floh report advised, the representatives of the Batavian people could not yet lay down definitive constitutional settlements with the East Indian possessions. Yet the point was clear: the moment the patent expires, the East Indian Company’s possessions would immediately become the possessions of ‘the Batavian people’, and the inhabitants of the East Indian territories would be regarded on the same footing as those of the West.

The answer to the fourth and final question concerned the governance and administration of the colonial possessions. The Floh report maintained that the state ought to be responsible for law and order in the colonies, including the observance of all agreements between motherland and colony. The appointment of civil servants is the responsibility of the state, although the colonists have the right to appoint officials in the legal and police apparatus. Finally, only the state is authorized to levy taxes on agricultural and trade commodities. Although a lot of details and practicalities were still missing, the groundwork for colonial state-building was laid.³⁴

Two major differences between the Wiselius report and the Floh report stand out. First, the Floh report explicitly chooses to designate the overseas territories not as ‘parts’, ‘members’ or ‘departments’, but as ‘unalienable *possessions* of the state’. Notwithstanding the consent-based,

contractual understanding of the relationship between colony and motherland, this designation clearly points to an understanding of the relationship between motherland and colony in terms of subordination. The colonies were not considered on an equal level with, say, provinces. Secondly, unlike Wiselius c.s., the Floh report posited that the metropolitan administration of the colonies must be vested in a governmental body ‘separated from any other governing body’. This special governmental body was subjected to the legislative power. The colonial possessions, in this scheme, lack the right of political representation in the Republic’s supreme legislative body.

This was an unambiguous statement of *political* sovereignty over the overseas ‘possessions of the state’. Significantly, in the extensive debate following the introduction of the Floh report, this vision of a state-led colonial empire was not disputed. Instead, the debate immediately gravitated around the passionate criticisms regarding the report voiced by the leading republican-democratic representative Pieter Vreede. His main point of critique was that the constitutional articles made no mention of ending the institution of slavery. The Floh report, with reference to Saint-Domingue, had dismissed the ‘mistaken and premature’ application of ‘mesmerizing and conjuring notions of universal freedom and equality of rights’. In the French empire this had led to the ‘destruction of all social order’. Vreede, however, urged the Floh committee to go back to the drawing board and reconsider the omission of any reflection on how to end slavery. A majority of representatives in the National Assembly concurred to sending the committee back to work. Several weeks later, the Floh committee presented a new report addressing the issue. Again, Saint-Domingue was the main point of reference. The enslaved colonial population of African descent, it was argued by the committee members as well as numerous representatives, were not ‘civilized’, not sufficiently enlightened, to assume the rights and duties of free citizens. They were comparable to ‘children’.³⁵ To prevent the lamentable French-Caribbean scenes of war and anarchy, the constitution should therefore refrain from addressing the slavery question. The political framework underlying this constitutional silence was clear: the colonial empire was not an integrated part of one ‘indivisible’ constitutional realm as the Wiselius report had argued, but a hierarchically subordinate territory to be ruled by ‘special’ laws.³⁶ The National Assembly accepted the report with a majority of votes.

THE CONSTITUTIONS OF 1798 AND 1801

Although it is hardly ever noticed, it was this outline of the political architecture of the imperial realm by the Floh report that would be essentially maintained in the following constitutions. In August 1797, the National Assembly offered a draft constitution to the enfranchised part of the Dutch citizens in a referendum. But the democratic-republican camp had waged a passionate campaign against it. Across the political spectrum it was considered an ugly compromise that, in the end, satisfied no-one, and was voted down by a large majority. After a coup d'état of democratic-republican radicals (including Vreede) backed by French troops in January 1798, a new constitution was soon drafted and put to the vote. Although the radical faction of democratic-republican revolutionaries now had a free hand in drafting a new constitution, the Constitution of May 1798 stuck to the definition of the overseas territories as state 'possessions', not as departments (or members). They were now directly subjected to the motherland's *executive* power and deprived of any voice in the legislative power. The articles on colonies were moreover silent on non-Dutch inhabitants of the colonies, slavery, and the slave trade. A further specification of the constitutional settlement was left to a newly-chosen legislative body.

The radical coup d'état of January 1798 was soon followed by another coup six months later. The role of the democratic-republicans faded out; a new mood of moderation took hold. Three years later, in 1801, a more authoritarian political regime was established. A new constitution, written and forced through under Napoleon Bonaparte's command, vested the highest political authority in a small, centralized executive body, the so-called 'State Authority' (*Staatsbewind*). The 1801 constitution established two administrative councils, one for the West Indies and one for the East Indies. These Councils were 'directly subordinate' to the Republic's new executive, the State Authority. This was an affirmation of the state's supreme imperial sovereignty as formulated in the preceding revolutionary years.

The new constitution of 1801 stipulated that a new charter was to be drawn for the Asiatic Batavian possessions. The membership of the committee that was assigned to this task was of mixed composition. Dirk van Hogendorp, a fierce critic of the established East Indian ruling elite and a declared admirer of Raynal and Rousseau, was named a member of the charter committee.³⁷ But he would soon be toppled

from his post. S.C. Nederburgh, a member of the very East Indian ruling elite Van Hogendorp had criticized, was thus able to leave his mark on the charter. The final ‘Charter for the Foundation of Government and Administration of the East Indian Possessions’ of 1804 was preceded by a much longer advisory report containing the underlying views and reasoning behind it (published in late August 1803). Although the Charter only functioned for a few years, historians have assigned it a foundational status. The set of guiding principles for the Dutch imperial empire it put forth, however, did not significantly alter the groundwork that was laid during the Batavian Revolution. The charter confirmed the Floh report’s principle that the territories in the East Indies were ‘possessions of the state’ subjected to the State Authority. The colonial possessions were furthermore to be governed in such a way so as to attain the ‘highest stage of prosperity’, to arrive at the ‘most profitable commerce’, and to become ‘most beneficial for the land’s finances’. The one-way relationship was captured by the claim that the ‘colonies exist for the motherland; the motherland not for the colonies’.³⁸ The native inhabitants of the Dutch East Indies were there to be exploited as subjects, not to be emancipated into citizens.

The post-Napoleonic, Restoration constitution of 1815, finally, neither entailed a fundamental innovation. It placed the ‘colonies and possessions of the state in other parts of the world’ under the direct authority of King William I of Orange. Strictly speaking, already in 1806, the French King Louis Napoleon (Napoleon Bonaparte’s brother) had assumed this authority as king. But as we have seen, the transformation took place during the Batavian Revolution. It was during this period that the overseas territories were defined as ‘possessions of the state’ under the sovereign authority of the executive power in place (whether it be an executive council or a king). When King William I of Orange assumed this role of highest political authority over the colonies, he affirmed a conceptual transformation that was essentially already settled by the end of the Batavian Revolution.

THE DUTCH IMPERIAL NATION-STATE IN PERSPECTIVE

What is the significance of this transformation of the company-led Dutch trading empire into a state-led colonial empire? On a conceptual and constitutional level, the corporate sovereignty of trading companies was eliminated. The late eighteenth-century constitutional innovation of the

Dutch imperial realm can be seen as an effort to dismantle ‘corporate sovereignty’ and establish a clearer separation of colonial governance on the one hand and trade on the other hand. The latter—the effort to separate trade from politics—was never carried through. With the establishment of the Dutch Trading Society (*Nederlandse Handelsmaatschappij*) by King William I in 1824, a new state-backed and largely state-owned enterprise, the Dutch state strengthened its supervision of overseas trade.

From a comparative perspective, it is also instructive to observe that the nationalization and liquidation of the VOC (and the WIC, for that matter) was more abrupt than the gradual takeover of the East India Company by the British state. After the Battle of Plassey against the Nawab of Bengal (1757) and the Seven Years War (1756–1763), the British East India Company had gained vast territorial acquisitions. Lord North’s 1773 Regulating Act was a first step in centralizing the administration of India. In 1784, William Pitt’s so-called India Act established a Board of Control to monitor and instruct the EIC executives, thus subjecting the EIC to direct state supervision. A series of regulations and acts between the 1790s and 1820s further deprived the EIC of its semi-autonomous status within the British Empire. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the EIC thus became, as P.J. Marshall put it, ‘a subordinate instrument for carrying out imperial purposes rather than as an autonomous member of the British empire’.³⁹ Formally, the question of sovereignty remained unresolved, but it was widely accepted that the EIC managed its territories in name of the British state. The EIC was only formally abolished after the Indian Rebellion of 1857–1858.

Because of its relative weakness, the Dutch States General was not capable of gradually reforming and incorporating the VOC into the state structure in the way the British incorporated the East India Company into the British Empire. Until the Batavian Revolution, the Dutch Republic lacked a strong parliament, a powerful executive, and the unity to force the VOC to submit to a high degree of state supervision. In comparison with the gradual takeover of the East India Company by the British state, the assumption of political sovereignty of the Dutch state over the trading company’s possessions was belated, but once it took place, also more abrupt and far-reaching.

A second way to put the constitutional innovation into perspective is to observe that, in the short run, the constitutional innovation of the imperial realm around 1800 had a mixed impact on colonial practices, institutions, and governance cultures. This is perhaps one of the primary

reasons why historians have paid little attention to this era. In a way the initial limited impact of the new imperial constitution holds true *mutatis mutandis* for the Dutch domestic political situation too: the 1798 constitution that turned the United Provinces into a centralized nation-state did not suddenly wipe out all existing local, and regional institutions, governance structures, and civic identities.⁴⁰ The ‘old regime’ persisted until deep into nineteenth century. Yet the notion of one constitutionally unified nation-state, however tarnished the memory of the ‘French-Batavian era’ became, was undeniably the basis for nineteenth-century state-building processes. The establishment of Dutch imperial state-sovereignty also laid the basis for nineteenth-century colonial state-building. These state-building processes did not start from scratch, but built on the experiences of colonial administration, the ‘institutional memory’, and to some extent, the very personnel of the era of the Companies.⁴¹ As so often in moments of swift constitutional innovation, on paper the break was more radical and immediate than on the ground.

At the same time, the new imperial supremacy of the Dutch state also had direct effects. Colonial state-building processes in the East Indies were kickstarted by the revolutionary general and regime change veteran Herman Willem Daendels.⁴² In 1807, Daendels was appointed by the French King Louis Napoleon as governor-general of the Dutch East Indies. He quickly expanded and professionalized the colonial army and civil service, raised the salaries of officials to combat corruption, built fortifications, constructed a road spanning the island of Java (*De Grote Postweg*), improving the island’s infrastructure, and moved the entire seat of government to the suburban area south of Batavia (*Weltvreden*) with a palace, open squares, and government buildings. Finally, Daendels waged a more aggressive politics against Java’s sultans and rulers, whom he considered remnants of an *ancien régime* feudal order, thereby initiating a series of conflicts that would lead to the devastating Java War (1825–1830). It was a Batavian revolutionary general who as a servant of the new Dutch imperial state subjected the island of Java to the supreme authority of the Dutch in a way a ‘company-state’ would never have been capable of.

By formally defining colonies as unalienable ‘possessions’ of one centralized, sovereign state, the Batavian revolutionaries bequeathed a state-led colonial empire. In doing so, they eradicated a ‘corporate body politic’, a form of socio-political organization that in revolutionary circles was seen as an outdated remnant of the *ancien régime*. Witnessing

an age of imperial revolutions, wars of independence and slave rebellions, and fearing the possible extinction of their entire empire, the majority of Batavian revolutionaries were keen on steering a moderate course. The high ideals of citizen emancipation grounded in conceptions of the rights of man were restricted to only some domains of the new Batavian political realm. The practical realities of the age of revolutions were experienced as too demanding and risky to push for a more revolutionary imperial agenda. It should come as no surprise that in these years we hardly find any Dutchmen claiming exceptionality for their imperial ideas and conduct.

NOTES

1. This chapter draws on some aspects of my recently published book, *The Citizenship Experiment. Contesting the Limits of Civic Equality and Participation in the Age of Revolutions* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). I am grateful to the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for the financial support for my research.
2. On the principle of *één en ondeelbaar*, see N. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 109–113.
3. L. Les, *Van Indië onder de Compagnie tot Indië onder de staat: De koloniale titel in de Staatsregeling van 1798* (Rotterdam: Hartog, 1947); G.J. Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten en de koloniën. Een onderzoek naar hun denkbeelden en optreden, 1770–1800* (Groningen: Tjeenk Willink, 1974).
4. L. Blussé, ‘Koning Willem I en de schepping van de koloniale staat,’ in *Een nieuwe staat. Het begin van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, ed. I. de Haan, and P. den Hoed en H. te Velde (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2013), 145–171, at 150; W. van den Doel, *Zo ver de wereld strekt. De geschiedenis van Nederland overzee vanaf 1800* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2011), 21–22; J. van Goor, ‘From Company to State,’ in idem, *Prelude to Colonialism: The Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004), 83–98. Alicia Schrikker’s recent historiographical overview is insightful but commences after the Batavian period. See her ‘Restoration in Java, 1815–1830,’ *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 130 (2015): 132–144.
5. Blussé, ‘Koning Willem I en de schepping van de koloniale staat,’ 151; W. Klooster and G. Oostindie, *Realm Between Empires: The Second Dutch Atlantic, 1680–1815* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 234.
6. Les, *Van Indië onder de Compagnie tot Indië onder de staat*, 92–102; Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten en de koloniën*, 214–216.

7. J. Adelman, ‘An Age of Imperial Revolutions,’ *American Historical Review* 113 (2008): 319–340. Cf. J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 219–250.
8. For a more elaborate, comparative perspective see my *The Citizenship Experiment: Contesting the Limits of Civic Equality and Participation in the Age of Revolutions* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).
9. The literature has grown immensely over the past two decades. Some of the works that have informed my views include: L. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); D.P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); D.P. Geggus and N. Fiering, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009); D.P. Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2014); J. Piquet, *L’émancipation des noirs dans la Révolution française: 1789–1795* (Paris: Karthala, 2002); J.D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); and idem, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
10. This is not to say that eighteenth-century European authors made no distinctions between and among Asian and African peoples. See D.A. Harvey, *The French Enlightenment and Its Others: The Mandarin, the Savage, and the Invention of the Human Sciences* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); S. Stuurman, *The Invention of Humanity: Equality and Cultural Difference in World History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); F.G. Whelan, *Enlightenment Political Thought and Non-Western Societies: Sultans and Savages* (New York: Routledge, 2009); and Devin Vartija, *The Colour of Equality: Racial Classification and Natural Equality in Enlightenment Encyclopaedias* (Dissertation, Utrecht University, 2018).
11. F. Grijzenhout, W. Velema, and N. van Sas, eds., *Het Bataafse experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013); A. Jourdan, *La Révolution batave entre la France et l’Amérique (1795–1806)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008); R. Koekkoek, “Eene waare en vrije Republiek.” Jan Konijnenburg, *De republikein en de uitvinding van de moderne republiek*, *De achttiende eeuw* 42 (2010): 236–260; J. Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld: het eerste parlement van Nederland 1796–1798* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012); and M. Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen. Democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland 1795–1801* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012).

12. I borrow this term from Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Négritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2005).
13. *Dagverhaal der handelingen van de Nationale Vergadering*, 9 vols. (The Hague: Schelle, 1796–1798), vol. 5, no. 492, 27 April 1797 (Session 22 April), 721–728, at 728.
14. The Dutch Antillean islands consisted of the (*Benedenwindse*) islands of the Leeward Antilles, Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, and the (*Bovenwindse*) islands of the Lesser Antilles, St. Maarten, Saba, and St. Eustasius.
15. Cf. Gert Oostindie's remark: 'We should not assume that contemporaries were already anticipating this overall decline of the Dutch Atlantic. During the Age of Revolutions as well as at its conclusion, policy makers voiced optimism in spite of their painful awareness of Dutch decline, or at least the conviction that the Caribbean colonies could play a vital role in the Netherlands regaining the status of a serious world player.' G. Oostindie, 'Dutch Atlantic Decline During the "Age of Revolutions",' in *Dutch Atlantic Connection: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*, ed. G. Oostindie and J.V. Roitman (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 309–335; See also Schutte, *De Nederlandse patriotten en de koloniën*, 214–215; and Gert Oostindie, 'De koning en de Caraïben,' in *Een nieuwe staat*, ed. De Haan, Den Hoed, and Te Velde, 173–181, at 174.
16. G. Oostindie and J. Roitman, eds., *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680–1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); G. Oostindie and J. Roitman, 'Repositioning the Dutch in the Atlantic, 1680–1800,' *Itinerario* 36 (2012): 129–160; J. Postma and V. Enthoven, eds., *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585–1817* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); and J. de Vries, 'The Dutch Atlantic Economies,' in *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice and Personnel*, ed. P.A. Coelani (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 1–29.
17. Oostindie and Klooster, *Realm Between Empires*.
18. J. de Vries and A. van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 449.
19. 'Ontwerp van Vertoog,' 21 December 1797, in 'Bijlagen,' Les, *Van Indië onder de Compagnie tot Indië onder de staat*, 125.
20. P.J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); P. Brandon, 'Between Company and State: the Dutch East and West India Companies as Brokers Between War and Profit,' in *The Corporation: A Critical, Multi-disciplinary Handbook*, ed. G. Baars and

- A. Spicer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 215–225; A. Weststeijn, ‘The VOC as a Company-State: Debating Seventeenth-Century Dutch Colonial Expansion,’ *Itinerario* 38 (2014): 13–34. See also K. Stapelbroek, ‘Trade, Chartered Companies, and Mercantile Associations,’ *The Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law*, ed. B. Fassbender and A. Peters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 338–358. Historians who have stressed the company-state character of the chartered trading companies have built on the work of J. van Goor, *Prelude to Colonialism: The Dutch in Asia* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004); and N. Steensgaard, ‘The Companies as a Specific Institution in the History of European Expansion,’ in *Companies and Trade: Essays on Overseas Trading Companies During the Ancien Régime*, ed. L. Blussé and F. Gaastra (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1981), 245–264.
21. Cf. G. Bossenga, ‘Estates, Orders, and Corps,’ in *Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Régime*, ed. W. Doyle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 141–166; M. Prak, *Republikeinse veelheid, democratische enkelyvoud. Sociale verandering in het Revolutietijdvak’s-Hertogenbosch, 1770–1820* (Nijmegen: Sun, 1999).
22. Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, 73–100.
23. The nationalization of the WIC, in which Grand Pensionary of Holland Laurens Pieter van de Spiegel played an important role, took place under the Orangist regime. But this was a reluctant, somewhat opportunistic move which did not involve much conceptual or constitutional innovation. Schutte, *De Nederlandse Patriotten en de koloniën*, 90–91. The Charter Society of Suriname (*Geocstroyerde Sociëiteit van Suriname*) was disbanded and nationalized in 1795.
24. The committee concerned with the West Indies (*Het Comité tot de zaken van de Colonien en Bezittingen op de kust van Guinea en Amerika*) was formed in October–November 1795. All West-Indian possessions had been placed under one governing body earlier that year.
25. The States General appointed 28 members nominated by the provinces. Holland (17 members) and Zeeland (6 members) dominated. Eventually, the committee shrunk to 21 members. The list of nominees for the province of Holland was drawn up by the revolutionary Provisional Representatives of Holland. For details, see Les, *Van Indië onder de Compagnie tot Indië onder de staat*, 13–15.
26. Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, 158–160.
27. Les, ‘Bijlagen,’ in idem, *Van Indië onder de Compagnie tot Indië onder de staat*, 116–117. Italics are mine.
28. Aristodemus en Sincerus, *Brieven over het bestuur der colonien Essequebo en Demerary*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam: W. Holtrop, 1785–1788); ‘Schets-project der nieuwe regeeringsvorm voor de Bataatsche Republicq,’ in

Colenbrander, *Gedenkstukken I*, 55–57. The authors behind this draft proposal were the banker Balthasar Elias Abbema and the baron Robert Jasper van der Capellen tot den Marsch.

29. Les, *Van Indië onder de Compagnie tot Indië onder de staat*, 44.
30. Les, *Van Indië onder de Compagnie tot Indië onder de staat*, 116–117.
31. The minutes of the *Dagverhaal* wrongly attribute this report to the committee chaired by De Mist. *Dagverhaal*, vol. 5, no. 491, 27 April 1797 (Session 22 April), 714–720.
32. Curiously, Schutte's *De Nederlandse patriotten en de koloniën* does not discuss this report. But see Les, *Van Indië onder de Compagnie tot Indië onder de staat*.
33. For the seventeenth-century background for such views, see the chapter by Arthur Weststeijn in this volume. Recently, Koen Stapelbroek has devoted several insightful studies to eighteenth-century Dutch debates about commerce, international politics, and empire. See in particular his ‘Raynal, Luzac and Pinto: Global Trade, the Dutch Republic and the History and Constitution of the Commercial State,’ in *Autour de l'Abbé Raynal: Genèse et enjeux politiques de l'Histoire de deux Indes*, ed. A. Alimento and G. Goggi (Paris: Centre international d'étude du XVIII^e siècle, 2018), 45–61.
34. *Dagverhaal*, vol. 5, no. 491, 27 April 1797 (Session 22 April), 714–720.
35. *Dagverhaal*, vol. 6, no. 547, June 1, 1797 (Session 22 May), 3–8.
36. On ‘special laws,’ see J.M. Fradera, *The Imperial Nation: Citizens and Subjects in the British, French, Spanish and American Empires*, trans. R. MacKay (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 74–88.
37. Dirk, the one-year older brother of the future statesman Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, had resided in the Dutch Indies between 1785 and 1799 as admiralty officer and merchant of the Dutch East India Company, served as ‘regent’ (colonial administrator) of various regions, and eventually became governor of East-Java between 1794 and 1798. Dirk wrote a *Report on the Present State of the Batavian Settlements in East Indies and of Its Trade; Together with Some Views on the Change and Reform of Its Governance* (1799).
38. ‘Rapport van de Commissie tot de Oost-Indische Zaken, aan het Staatsbewind der Bataafse Republiek. In Den Haag, den 31 Augustus 1803,’ in *Verzameling van instructiën, ordonnanciën en reglementen voor de regering van Nederlansk Indië* (Batavia: Lands-drukkerij, 1848), 130–132, 141.
39. P.J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America, c. 1750–1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 207–208.

40. See the NWO Project ‘The Persistence of Civic Identities in the Netherlands, 1747–1848,’ at the University of Leiden directed by Judith Pollman and Henk te Velde, as well as the special issue ‘Political Change and Civic Continuities,’ *BMGN—Low Countries Historical Review* 133 (2018), ed. Joris Oddens and Diederik Smit.
41. See the VIDI research project ‘Institutional memory in the making of colonial culture: history, experience and ideas in Dutch colonialism in Asia, 1700–1870’ by Alicia Schrikker and her chapter in this volume.
42. Daendels participated in the 1795 revolution and both the 1798 January and June coups.

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CHAPTER 8

Rule of Lawyers: Liberalism and Colonial Judges in Nineteenth-Century Java

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The *landraad* in nineteenth-century Java was a colonial law court that embodied and reflected a segregated colonial state, where separate courts and laws existed for different population groups.¹ The *landraad* (plural: *landraden*) were regional law courts where only non-Europeans were tried and the courts were—increasing in number from 2 in 1800 to 89 in 1874—one of the most visible representations of Dutch colonial rule on the island. The courtrooms of the *landraden* were also highly pluralistic in nature since a majority of Javanese court members decided over the verdict together with the Dutch president by ballot, with Islamic and Chinese leaders providing advice on religious and local legal traditions. The pluralistic courtroom was, because of the encounters between and across the various powers, an arena where the colonial state, based on a ‘dual rule’² of Dutch and Javanese elites, gradually consolidated.³

In the course of the nineteenth century, the *landraad* increasingly received criticism from Dutch liberal lawyers, who argued that the colonial administrators who presided the *landraden* had to be replaced by

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'independent' Dutch judges. Representing an influential constitutional liberalism as manifested in the Netherlands at the time, they focused on bringing their ideals of the separation of powers to the colonial courtroom. Or as M.C. Piepers, one of the most vocal nineteenth-century colonial jurists, assuredly wrote: 'there is also a rule of law in the Indies.'⁴ Their plea was heeded as, from 1869 onwards, jurists gradually started to replace the Dutch administrators (residents) as presidents of the *landraden*.

This chapter is a critical assessment of the vision of the rule of law as well as the actual practices of the liberal colonial jurists within the legal plural space of the *landraad* in Java. Historian Cees Fasseur has described the newly arriving colonial jurists as the ones who introduced enlightened ideas about law to the colony. He saw the introduction of a separate ('*onafhankelijk*'—independent) judiciary as exerting a positive influence 'that was fostered by a corps of highly trained Dutch officials even though they functioned within a colonial setting and framework'.⁵ This argument has been repeated by other historians, but never critically reappraised. What exactly did change after 1869? How did the liberal colonial jurists think they were bringing the rule of law to Java? What were the consequences of them functioning within a colonial setting and framework? Which form of colonial liberalism did these jurists represent, in theory and in practice?

To answer these questions, I will study the liberal jurists as 'intermediate thinkers' of empire. Although the ideas of colonial jurists are often overlooked, as they were not the producers of high scholarship, they did contribute to an 'industry' of liberalism by expressing their views in societies, publishing pamphlets, writing in journals and newspapers, and arguing in Dutch parliament.⁶ By taking the developing ideas of the practicing colonial jurists seriously, it becomes possible to connect visions to jurispractice.⁷ Visions are never without context and the context, as I show in this chapter, impacts the vision as it developed. As Andrew Fitzmaurice has argued in a critique of the work of Lauren Benton who has strongly advocated the study of legal pluralism and jurispractice in colonial history, the danger of a too narrow focus on jurispractice is a negligence of the impact of intellectual ideas on local practices, and vice versa.⁸

To fully acknowledge the local practices of plural legal spaces, moreover, all actors present in the studied plural space are important, especially in a courtroom where the Dutch judge often did not speak the language of the suspects and witnesses, could not make a verdict without

the majority vote of the Javanese members, and was less familiar with the region than the other actors working at the court. The *landraad*, therefore, was a plural space where not only the Dutch president of the court, but also its Javanese court members and other local elites, practiced their ideas. All these intermediate thinkers interacting together formed and shaped a colonial legal culture in nineteenth-century Java.

Although the liberal jurists aimed at bringing the rule of law to Java, and often believed they did, I argue in this chapter that their perceptions of and engagements with the colonial reality proved them to be less straightforwardly ‘liberal’ in their actions, than assumed so far in the historiography. I show this by looking at their interactions with the local prosecutors (*jaksa*) and Javanese court members in the pluralistic courts. I use an actor-focused approach and scrutinize practiced visions to demonstrate that liberal jurists, arriving in the colonial courtrooms during the decades after the reform of 1869, safeguarded their own sphere of influence and were central to furthering colonial rule (Image 8.1).



Image 8.1 *Landraad* session in Banyumas, ca. 1900. Leiden University Libraries Digital Collections [KITLV 119285]

RULE OF LAW IDEAS

Dutch liberalism in the nineteenth century followed the continental liberal trajectory and focused on juridical constitutionalism. Contrary to French and German liberals, in the Netherlands the liberals were very influential in national politics, especially between 1848 and 1900. Liberal leader, and constitutional law professor, Johan Rudolf Thorbecke would become a ‘national hero’ for having drafted the new constitution of 1848. Although impactful, Dutch nineteenth-century liberalism did not have specific great thinkers and; as historian Henk te Velde argues, Dutch liberalism was ‘more a culture than an elaborate ideology.’⁹

Central to this constitutional liberal culture was the focus on the ideal of the rule of law, the *rechtsstaat*, which would be very apparent and influential for generations of liberals and especially liberal lawyers to come, who were part of the elitist men’s club that constituted the liberal legal community.¹⁰ To liberal lawyers, the *rechtstaat* was seen as the ultimate ingredient to strong and just rule. The idea of the separation of powers had been circulating in the Netherlands since the end of the eighteenth century when there were various ideas about who had to be protected against whom. Eventually, in the Dutch context the separation of powers would be enforced mainly to prevent the administrative power from gaining too much influence over the judiciary.¹¹ The Constitution of 1814 and its successors left no doubt as to the independence of the judiciary from administrative and legislative powers, although it was only in 1848 that the upper middle class, with its liberal judicial convictions, held enough power to organize a separate judiciary in the Netherlands.¹² Even then, the legal system would remain a battleground, in particular regarding the aristocracy’s influence on the provincial courts.¹³

Liberal ideas on law also reached the Dutch colonies, but the historiography of nineteenth-century Java devotes most attention to an economic liberalism that advocated the abolishment of the cultivation system (*cultuurstelsel*). Constitutional liberalism, however, was also apparent in the colonial context and manifested itself to a certain extent together with the economic reforms. After all, as we already know from British empire studies, the law was part of the broader colonial ideology and legitimacy of colonial empires. An extensive literature on British India in particular shows how, already in the eighteenth century,

the colonial enterprise, and the legal system in particular, was promoted as a liberal mission to free the ‘oppressed’ local population from their ‘despotic rulers.’¹⁴ Ideas about enlightened justice and the rule of law, however, clashed with the unequal and authoritarian colonial reality, and colonial law courts were an arena where the essentially unenlightened character of the colonial state was revealed. At the same time, colonial reality was more complicated than full-blown racism covered by some legal liberal patchwork. Enlightenment ideals about both the legal system and the civilizing mission were real, often incorporated in the legal system, and passionately defended by their proponents (all with their own interests and ideals) within the context of colonial reality. In British India, the expensive and large legal court system was more related to the mission of spreading ‘civilization and justice’ than to securing imperial needs.¹⁵ In practice, liberal reforms such as uniform legal codification did not contribute to fair legal procedures though, because notions of inequality between races were still central to the codes and legal practices.¹⁶ Over time, a colonial liberalism developed, legitimizing the politics of difference in the colonial context.¹⁷

A civilizing rhetoric was present in the Dutch colonies too, although it was less propagated as a colonial ideology nor exclusively labelled as liberal thinking at first.¹⁸ When from the second half of the nineteenth century liberal influence in the Netherlands increased, Western law was more and more promoted as a means of ‘civilizing the Javanese people.’¹⁹ Simultaneously, however, it was questioned whether the Javanese were ‘ready’ for Western laws, and the importance of applying Islamic or customary laws was discussed. The pluralistic courtroom of the *landraad* would remain in place, also because the colonizers soon realized that they could not administer justice without the information, networks, and prestige of the Javanese elite officials (*priyayi*) within the colonial policy of dual rule. Even though they successfully removed local laws from the codes, the institutional pluralistic character of the courts continued.

Despite these different circumstances in the colonial context and the particular nature of dual rule, the Dutch debate on the separation of powers did take place with regards to the colonial context. The judicial power in the hands of the resident was increasingly criticized by liberal lawyers claiming that it led to the abuse of power, while being fiercely defended by others. Intermediate Dutch thinkers such as private attorneys, residents, and members of judicial reform committees took part in this debate.

At the start of the nineteenth century, the Asian Charter of 1803 had already proposed that administrative officials should no longer preside over the Javanese colonial courts. This call was not heeded. In 1839, a legal reform committee presided by the Dutch jurist C.J. Scholten van Oud-Haarlem also pleaded to install separate presidents at the *landraden* to foster the independence of the judicial system.²⁰ Most conservatives, and in particular State Secretary J.C. Baud were opposing separate *landraad* presidents though. From Baud's perspective, it was exactly the concentration of power in the hands of one person in a residency that had convincingly established the colonial authority. He preferred everything to remain as it was, in particular to ensure that the colonial government could continue to reap the benefits of the cultivation system.²¹

The call for independent, judicial, *landraad* presidents was reiterated during the following decades, predominantly by liberal lawyers who denounced the entanglement of interests and abuses of power. Especially private attorney Charles Jean François Mirandolle believed that there would be no greater favour to offer to Java than a separation of administrative and judicial powers. Mirandolle (1827–1884) was born in Paramaribo, Surinam, trained as a lawyer in the Netherlands and owned a law firm in Java from 1853 to 1864. After his return to the Netherlands, he became a member of Dutch parliament. In his articles and letters, Mirandolle refuted the much-heard argument among the Dutch that 'the Oriental' in nature would prefer a unification of government powers. According to Mirandolle, this was not an argument to allow injustice to exist. He argued that the dependent judge was in contradiction with the principles of justice, so this had to be changed anyway.²²

In response to an inquiry by the new Attorney General W. Rappard in 1860 who expressed his concern about the quality of the case files of the regional law courts, the few Dutch judges present in Java mainly identified the lack of time and knowledge among residents.²³ Mirandolle, however, when asked for his view, emphasized the fact that the real issue here was that residents would always put their political interests first, and that this was especially detrimental to criminal law. According to him, Dutch residents only had two aims when administering criminal justice in the colony. Their main goal was to get the suspect declared guilty during a *landraad* session. Therefore, he maintained, they often

neglected to investigate whether the accused was actually guilty at all. Second, the confession of the accused was considered the most important proof. To obtain a confession ‘often moral, and sometimes personal torture’ was applied. This could include flogging, sleep deprivation or the torture of relatives. Moreover, bribing and punishing witnesses was not uncommon.²⁴

Mirandolle and others published their claims in newspapers and journals, publishing pressing articles that demanded reform.²⁵ In 1863 attorney J. van Gennep and notary J.R. Kleijn established the Indies' Weekly Journal of Law (*Indisch Weekblad van het Recht*) which declared that its aim was the denunciation of abuse: ‘A constantly open opportunity to report facts and existing abuses will be a forceful instrument, not only to repel but also to prevent arbitrariness.’²⁶ In the first editions of the journal, articles were devoted to the rattan punishment and why it had to be abolished, the police magistracy, and the subject of the resident as *landraad* president.

After much debate, the judicial *landraad* president was introduced in Java in 1869. The reform was possible at that moment due to the increased power of the liberals in the Netherlands, who targeted the cultivation system and related this to the absence of a separation of powers in the colony. But it was also possible because the residents themselves did not entirely oppose the plan any longer. Due to their increasing workload as the colonial bureaucracy expanded, the idea of someone else taking over this considerable task seemed rather appealing. The residents who responded to the inquiry by attorney general Rappard did not mention any problems regarding criminal law practice, but emphasized the difficulties with civil law cases on a regional level and therefore expressed some willingness to accept the appointment of judicial officials in the residencies.²⁷

THE ARRIVAL OF JURISTS IN THE COLONIAL COURTROOM

Although the turning point is set in 1869, in reality the arrival of jurists in the residencies would be gradual. Ten years after the reform, there were still thirty-eight *landraden* (out of 89) in Java headed by the resident.²⁸ Only in 1901 all *landraden* in Java were presided over by separate judicial officials. The police magistracy would remain in the hands of the resident until 1914, and on some of the other islands the resident would continue to preside the *landraad* until decolonization.²⁹

The colonial jurists were educated at a Dutch university and their training was completely focused on Dutch law, followed by a separate colonial exam with a preparation time of around one to two years. The limited training consisted of an introduction in the geography, ethnology, and languages (Malay or Javanese) of the Indonesian archipelago, Islamic law and other local customs and laws, and the colonial legislation and regulations. The courses offered as preparation for the exams were very theoretical, with little training in local languages or legal practices in preparation of the future profession as colonial judge. Courses in Islamic law were for the most part of the nineteenth century based on a rather random selection of Islamic texts, while local laws and customs were described as ‘anomalies.’ It was never considered to appoint Javanese lecturers for language or legal training.³⁰

It also happened regularly that someone without having done the exam was appointed as a colonial judicial official. Lawyers who had worked for at least four years as private attorneys in the Netherlands Indies were exempt from the exam and could be appointed as colonial judge. And in times of a shortage of lawyers, fresh graduates were even appointed. After the reform of 1869, so many new judges were needed that in 1873 and 1874 no less than 42 jurists were recruited who had only taken a lighter exam in the colonial legislation and regulations and elementary knowledge of Javanese.³¹

Both administrative and judicial officials in colonial service were expected to be raised in a ‘civilized European’ environment while knowledge of and feeling with ‘the East’ was deemed important as well.³² Commotion ensued when the Indo-European C.J. van Haastert—European by law but with a Javanese mother—was listed for the office of colonial official in 1847. He held a doctorate in law from Leiden University in the Netherlands and had returned to Java. Although considered qualified, according to Governor General Rochussen he would be unable to exercise enough authority over the local population and Javanese elite officials (*priyayi*), and was therefore ineligible for a government position. After protest from other colonial officials though, many of whom had Indonesian blood themselves or who had Indo-European children by their Javanese concubine, it was decided that anyone who had passed the colonial exam was allowed to work as an official in the Netherlands Indies.³³

Although formally everyone, except for Foreign Orientals (Chinese and Arabs) and Western Foreigners (who were only allowed in engineering positions), was allowed to take up the position of administrative or judicial

official, in practice in the nineteenth-century Indonesians were never appointed at the Dutch side of the civil service, certainly not as resident or judge. In the entire century, only one Indonesian, Raden Mas Ismangoen Danoe Winoto, took and passed, with very good results, the administrative exam (*grootambtenaarsexamen*) in the Netherlands, but he was denied a position at the colonial civil service.³⁴ The first Indonesian *landraad* president Moehamad Hamid was only appointed in 1925.³⁵

The administrative and judicial colonial officials were predominantly Dutch, but they came from different social backgrounds. Whereas the judicial officials held a university degree, the administrative officials were often trained at the colonial institution in Delft (and later Leiden). The difference with the less practical and more theoretical jurists led to extra tensions when the jurists arrived in the Javanese residencies to preside over the *landraden* after 1869. Administrative official Van der Kemp wrote in 1885 that the jurists had been acting arrogantly and dismissively, and he argued that the jurists' bookish view of the world was not appropriate in a colonial situation. He denounced the beliefs of jurists such as A.J. Immink and Piepers—both of whom served first as *landraad* judge and thereafter as a member of the Supreme Court—neither of whom accorded much value to a knowledge of local languages, but instead emphasized the importance of following the colonial law codes closely.³⁶

The jurist A.J. Immink, appointed *landraad* president in Surabaya in 1876, on his turn was very unhappy with the way he was welcomed by the resident.³⁷ He argued that the colonial civil service was 'far from content finding a kind of obstructor next to them, to whom the native could turn for protection against injustice and arbitrariness.' He published a pamphlet in which he discussed a few examples to show that the administrative officials were opposing the new judicial *landraad* presidents.

Fierce in particular was the conflict of *landraad* judge J. de Haas with the assistant resident of Semarang, F.W.H. van Straaten in 1876. Van Straaten had decided to preside over a court case when judge De Haas had fallen ill. Although De Haas wanted to continue presiding over the *landraad* sessions until his deputy arrived, in two opium cases the assistant resident decided he would himself preside instead. The assistant resident even wrote to the Javanese court members and advisors that they were not allowed to act in *landraad* sessions presided by judge De Haas. This dispute became the talk of town and on the first day of the court session, when De Haas arrived to act as a judge despite his illness,

a crowd gathered in front of the *landraad*. The chief jaksa, Javanese members, and the Chinese officer were present, but then a messenger announced that the *landraad* judge had to leave the room, because assistant resident Van Straaten was to replace him. He also ordered the chief jaksa not to carry out his functions. This put the chief jaksa in a difficult position, since he was formally working on behalf of the assistant resident, but within the courtroom he was closely cooperating with the *landraad* judge. This violation of the official regulations caused such a dilemma for the chief jaksa that he pretended to faint in court, causing the session to be cancelled. The other jaksas were nowhere to be found and the court session could not proceed. Of this incident, Immink wrote ‘whether the illness of the chief jaksa was truly severe has not been proven. It is certain though, that he and those in a similar position, had found themselves in a difficult position. ... A sudden ailment was certainly a useful instrument to escape from this difficulty.’³⁸

Another example mentioned in Immink’s pamphlet was a conflict over seating arrangements at an official gathering with *priyayi*, where the *landraad* president of Kediri M.C. Piepers to his ‘perplexity’ had not been seated right next to Resident J.H. Hagen, but one seat away. After a heated correspondence between Piepers and the resident, the former was transferred to Tuban. According to Immink, this case was especially harmful because it was important to communicate to the Javanese chiefs ‘which rank within official Javanese society was given to the—almost entirely newly established—Independent law court.’ In other words, this conflict could have meant a degradation of the status of the *landraad*. Also, that the *landraad* judge could be dismissed by the government was an encroachment of his ‘independent’ position. Thus, according to Immink, judges in the Netherlands Indies were still ‘legally fully dependent’ and no measures had been taken to alter this.³⁹

Despite their lack of interest in local legal traditions, the liberal jurists did strive for certain reforms in favour of the Javanese population. The number of acquittals by the *landraden* seems to have increased, pointing at a more critical assessment of legal evidence, and jurists also actively tried to shorten the period of pretrial detentions.⁴⁰ As the colonial jurists became a common figure in the residency, however, their interaction with local circumstances and actors, started to influence their vision on the rule of law in the colonial context. First of all, they functioned within the segregated legal system where the unequal features would hardly be resolved. Marieke Bloembergen has argued, how, over the course of

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most officials and jurists supported the segregated system either from a conservative or a liberal perspective. Or—and this was often the case—from a pragmatic policy perspective that never chose between the ideal of unification or dualism.⁴¹ Wim van den Doel describes how liberal thinking by Dutch colonizers was often combined with ‘paternalistic acting’.⁴²

On a micro level, when we study the daily practices of liberal judges at the *landraad*, they encountered another and complicating context within the segregated legal system: a pluralistic courtroom where local elites were seated as court members and acted as prosecutor (*jaksa*).

DUTCH AND JAVANESE JUDGES

Although they often did not mention it in their letters, articles, and memoirs, the Dutch *landraad* presidents were not single judges. A *landraad* verdict was always decided by ballot and the Javanese court members held a majority of the votes. But, when in the 1850s and 1860s the dependent position of the *landraad* presidents was heavily discussed, the position of the Javanese court members was not under discussion. The separation of the administrative and judicial powers through the introduction of the judicial *landraad* president in 1869 had been advocated by jurists as an important reform, even though in fact, only one official had been replaced in an environment where no further separation of powers would take place. And the colonial judges would, also after arrival, not strive for independent Javanese judges in the *landraad*. The Javanese court members would remain in their administrative appointments and were involved in both the preliminary police investigations and the judicial administration. Moreover, the nomination of new Javanese court members to the *landraad* was still arranged by the resident and not by the *landraad* president.⁴³

The Asian Charter of 1803 had recommended the appointment of both independent Dutch *and* independent Javanese court members to the *landraden*. The advice had been of no avail. In 1869, with the introduction of the judicial *landraad* presidents, this was not even on the table. During the entire decision-making process in 1869, no one mentioned that the other members in the *landraad*, the Javanese judges, would still not meet the standards of what was then described as the ideal of a ‘civilized nation’; after all, the Javanese members—with the right to vote on the verdict and in the position of judge—executed administrative functions along with their judicial ones, as the resident did.

Although the Javanese members were mentioned obliquely in the discussions, and any proposals to abolish the Javanese members altogether and introduce a European single judge was firmly opposed, no one suggested even once that the Javanese members should be independent. Mirandolle was the only one who in the 1860s wrote about the relations between the Javanese members and the European president. Interestingly enough, he was convinced that the Javanese members would actually regain their independence once judicial officials were presiding over the *landraad* instead of the resident, since they had a more complex and submissive relationship with the latter.⁴⁴

Even if the Javanese members were themselves the target or victim of a crime, and were consequently personally involved in a case as one of the parties, they were not necessarily replaced as court members during the court session. After the revolt in Cilegon (West Java) in 1888, for example, the court consisted of local *priyayi* who came from the region and were related to the victims. The *patih* (right hand of the regent) Mas Pennah had been a target and had escaped because he had not been at home during the outburst of violence. Nonetheless, he was appointed the leader of the preliminary investigations *and* he was seated in court as a voting member. Other members of the court had also been closely involved, and the cousin of one of the court members, Entol Goenadaja, the *wedono* (district head) of Cilegon, had been one of the victims.⁴⁵

During the 1880s, the Indies Organisation for Jurists (*Indische Juristenvereeniging*) was established, in which possible reforms of the colonial legal system were discussed. In practice, this organization mainly focused on the protection of the colonial judges' own position regarding topics of remuneration and protection against impeachment, and sometimes the police magistracy that was still in the hands of the resident. After only a few years, the organization stopped actively meeting.⁴⁶ Through judicial journals such as the *Weekly Journal of Law* and the *Indies Journal of Law*, jurists would still share information in the form of verdicts and articles. Quite soon though, the *Weekly Journal* would lose most of its liberal fighting spirit.

In none of the discussions held among Dutch colonial jurists were the Javanese *priyayi* consulted for advice. Legal education for them was also not arranged and they were mainly deemed important for their knowledge of the local circumstances. Jurist H.L.E. De Waal pleaded for single European *landraad* judges, but he considered it important that Javanese members remain seated in the pluralistic courts as advisors. For

De Waal, the Javanese judges were ‘unsuitable’ as judges but remained essential as reservoirs of local knowledge. As he noted: ‘The native is not developed enough to be able to accurately decide over somewhat complicated cases, and his character and his awe for authority make him unsuitable for the independent position of impartial judge. On the other hand, his advice on the assessment of factual or local circumstances are of immeasurable value.’⁴⁷

It was only almost twenty years later, during a general meeting of the *Indische Genootschap* in 1900, that a proposal for reform provided by a prominent Javanese regent was mentioned. During that meeting, D. Mounier first proposed removing the Javanese members from the *landraad* altogether. He presented a number of arguments that incongruously veered between their being too dependent on the president and oldest member, and their being inclined to oppose the judicial president without good reason.⁴⁸ He suggested removing the Javanese members from the courtroom temporarily, but he was also in favour of a proposal of the regent of Demak, Raden Mas Adipati Ario Hadiningrat,⁴⁹ who advocated for a Javanese judicial corps that would function independently from the administrative Javanese officials.⁵⁰

Hadiningrat had been chief jaksa in Pekalongan before he became the regent of Demak. He published his first article in a colonial journal in the early 1870s and would continue writing and corresponding about necessary (mainly educational) reforms to improve the quality of the colonial civil service. He and his family—his father had arranged a Dutch tutor for his four sons, and Raden Adjeng Kartini was his niece—were very invested in educational issues. Hadiningrat was loyal to the colonial government but critical—he would be the first president of the *Regentenbond*, and at the end of the nineteenth century some appreciation for his proposals would emerge.⁵¹

Hadiningrat was essentially the only intermediate thinker in colonial debates who presented a similar argument for the ‘independent’ position of both the Dutch *and* Javanese judges. In 1898, he wrote an article in which he proposed several reforms. He had already proposed these reforms in a government report in 1876, but they were dismissed by his Dutch supervisors in the colonial civil service. One of his main ideas was the modelling of the ‘native branch’ of the colonial government after the Dutch branch. Important to this model was the introduction of a ‘separate native judicial power’ that was organized ‘separately from the branch that deals with administrative matters.’ This separate corps of indigenous

judicial officials had to be incorporated in the corps of Dutch judicial officials.⁵²

Hadiningrat's suggestion of introducing separate Javanese judges, was again ignored; only his plea for Western education for *priyayi* was welcomed. Parliamentarian C. Th. Van Deventer, one of the leading figures of the Ethical Policy movement, responded to Mounier's reference to Hadiningrat's idea only by saying that it would be a 'major political mistake' and a 'dangerous experiment' to remove the Javanese members from the pluralistic courts. He blamed the colonial government for having neglected to bring the Javanese to a more 'developed' level, and he wanted action to be taken on this matter as soon as possible.⁵³ Jurist Maclaine Pont also did not want to exclude the Javanese members from the court sessions, mainly because of their knowledge of the land: 'They [the local members] are also useful, because the presidents are, especially at the start of their career, sometimes burdened by their embellished erudition, which can quite get in their way, and then it is often the common sense of the *Landraad* members that prevents them from curious verdicts.' He also pleaded to educate the Javanese aristocratic sons: 'Because law is not that difficult, and it is perfectly possible to be studied by a well-developed Javanese.'⁵⁴ The first law school for Indonesians was opened in 1908.

In any case, the Javanese administrative officials continued to be appointed as law court members. In 1916, *landraad* judge Boekhoudt emphasized the importance of the views and knowledge of the Javanese members in criminal cases: 'Without the forceful cooperation of their side, it is impossible for a young jurist to successfully bring a case to a good end.'⁵⁵ J. Sibinius Trip similarly emphasized that Javanese members had prevented him, as a judge (1859–1865), from wrong verdicts, as he wrote in the *Indies' Weekly Journal of Law* in 1905. He described how the sentence '*Bagaimana toewan poenja soeka?*' ('As you wish, Sir') articulated by Javanese members who followed the views of the Dutch judge during the deliberations, had to be understood as a sign that the *priyayi* knew more about the case and that it was best to follow their advice.⁵⁶

Yet, the colonial mind of all these colonial jurists could not comprehend a similar expectation of 'independence' from both Dutch and Javanese law court members. Whereas the liberal jurists had been adamant in their belief that the Dutch *landraad* presidents had to be judicial officials with no administrative responsibilities, they did not propose the same reform for the Javanese court members (Image 8.2).



Image 8.2 Hadiningrat in 1911. Leiden University Libraries Digital Collections [KITLV 15499]

JUDGE AND JAKSA

The most direct contact the *landraad* presidents had was with the Javanese public prosecutors; the jaksas. During pluralistic court sessions, the jaksas functioned both as public prosecutors and as translators. In the Netherlands Indies, there was no department of justice until 1870, and the attorney general was the head of the European public prosecutors, not the jaksas who received their orders directly from the resident. This meant that the resident was not only the *landraad* judge, but also the head of the police and supervisor of the prosecutor. Also, after the introduction of the judicial *landraad* presidents, the resident remained the direct supervisor of the jaksas.⁵⁷ We have seen above that this could lead to complicated situations in the case of the chief jaksa who pretended to faint in the courtroom when he found himself in the middle of a conflict between the resident and judge.

Remarkably, at the end of the nineteenth century, most liberal jurists still preferred the situation in which the jaksa remained under the resident rather than the attorney general. Although as defenders of the *trias politica* they fought fiercely for the introduction of independent

landraad judges, they were not so principled regarding the position of the jaksas. Generally, they agreed on a close supervision of the jaksas by the resident.

In 1885, the jurist Abendanon proved an exception when he suggested during a meeting of the Indies' Jurists Association to subordinate the jaksas to the attorney general and to be supervised by the European public prosecutor of the Council of Justice; the only person to vote for this plan was Abendanon himself. The only majority vote was for improved career prospects and a corresponding raise in salary within the jaksas ranks. Most jurists expected much from better-educated jaksas.⁵⁸

During the meeting a few jurists even pleaded for the introduction of 'European jaksas,' European prosecutors who would replace the Javanese jaksas in the pluralistic courts. This proposal was repudiated, though, as an idea from other-worldly colonial jurists. Indirectly affirming the importance of the jaksas, administrative official Van der Kemp commented cynically: 'Ah, well, of course! If one would have such attributes [European prosecutors], then, administering justice over the Natives by scholars unfamiliar with the people will not be that hard.'⁵⁹ Altogether, the position of the jaksas would not change and they remained outside the Public Prosecution Service.

In 1884, jurist W.A.J. Van Davelaar wrote in a judicial handbook that it was impossible to give jaksas responsibilities comparable to those of European prosecutors. The Public Prosecution Service had to be independent, and according to Van Davelaar the jaksas could not possibly meet this requirement. First, because they were often lower ranked than the Javanese members of the law court—if these were regent or patih—and they would therefore tend to follow their orders instead of acting independently. Second, the jaksas did not have the judicial knowledge necessary to be able to keep standing before the European court president.⁶⁰ Thanks to these two criticisms, the position of the jaksas was increasingly stripped of its responsibilities over the course of the nineteenth century. Most tellingly, the jaksas were stripped of their responsibility for drafting indictments (*acte van beschuldiging*), which became the responsibility of the *landraad* judge.

A first step in this reform was that it was decided in 1885 that the document of reference (*acte van verwijzing*; document that decided by which law court a case would be administered) would from then on be drafted by the *landraad* judge instead of the resident.⁶¹ The division of labour was that the *landraad* judge drafted the document of reference

whereas the *jaksa* drafted the indictment. The accusations made in the indictment had to be restricted to the boundaries set by the document of reference.⁶² In practice, the *landraad* judge also checked the indictment written by the *jaksa*, because it was said the *jaksas* could not draft indictments on their own. According to the Native Regulations, the indictment had to include the facts that were seen as proven by the prosecutor and that were the basis of the accusation. Instead, the indictment quite often was more a summary of the statements given by the suspect and witnesses during interrogations, followed by the charge; thus the offence for which the defendant was being charged remained unclear, as was any determination, for example, of whether the crime that had been committed was premeditated or not.⁶³ In 1898, indictments were even completely taken away from the *jaksa* by abolishing the indictment altogether, and keeping the document of reference (drafted by the *landraad* judge) and formally introducing this document as the indictment.⁶⁴

The road to these reforms was characterized by technical, judicial discussions, in which Piepers in particular took a very legalistic approach; the act of reference had to be correct, and would otherwise be declared illegitimate. He was opposed by Attorney General W. de Gelder, who wanted to deal with this in a more lenient manner. Apart from this technical debate, all jurists generally agreed that the indictment had to be abolished and that the *landraad* judge had to continue writing the document of reference.⁶⁵ This marginalized the role of the *jaksa*.

The *landraad* judges essentially came to fulfil the positions of both judge and prosecutor. The young *landraad* President Cornelis (Kees) Star Nauta Carsten noticed this and wrote about it to his father (himself a jurist) in 1920, not long after his first appointment to a *landraad*. He described how he received cases from the administrative government and decided whether they had been investigated sufficiently. If there was enough proof, he would immediately draft the indictment: ‘So, I am not only the president of a law court with two native members, but also at the same time more or less the Public Prosecution Service.’ He did not think very highly of the *jaksa*, of whom he wrote ‘there is a native with the title of “native public prosecutor,” or *jaksa*, but his responsibility exists solely of interrogating the suspect, who has been brought to the capital of the residency, and is kept there in prison. Later, during the court session, he [the *jaksa*] is not much more than a translator.’⁶⁶

Altogether, it is clear that the liberal jurists were not interested in advocating a more independent position for the Javanese prosecutors.

The *jaksas* continued to be subordinated to the resident and regent, instead of the attorney general as was the practice in the Netherlands. Moreover, the *landraad* judges were now even fulfilling the position of prosecutor and judge. The aim was no longer the rule of law—as it had been when striving for the independent *landraad* judges—but rather the establishment of a rule of lawyers, instead. Dutch jurists were so convinced of their moral superiority over the Javanese that they thought it defensible to unite several powers in their own position. This resulted partly from a desire for more influence than the residents, but it was also a paternalistic pursuit of better criminal justice for the Javanese. It was deemed impossible from the colonizer's perspective that *jaksas* might be able to faithfully and sufficiently exercise the responsibilities of a public prosecutor, even if they had been educated in judicial procedures and drafting indictments.

CONCLUSION: LIBERAL RHETORIC, COLONIAL REALITY

Dutch constitutional liberalism with its focus on a separate judiciary reached colonial Java in the 1860s in full force. Even though the new arriving Dutch judges in Java seemed to have improved the legal position of the Javanese population somewhat by following the prescribed rules and procedures more closely than the residents, they were also quick to manoeuvre themselves into a powerful position.

The colonial judges did not continue their pursuit of an entirely independent judiciary in the colonies by making themselves responsible for indictments, instead of the *jaksa*, and not promoting the idea of having independent Javanese judges in the *landraad*. By doing so, the colonial liberal jurists manifested themselves as intermediate actors who shaped a Dutch colonial liberalism. Javanese intermediate thinkers were hardly heard by the colonizers and not included in the colonial debates on legal reform. It is only through the silent protest of the fainted chief *jaksa*, and the persistent writings of *regent* Hadiningrat who argued in favour of separate Javanese judges, that we gain insights into the agency and ideas of the Javanese *priyayi* within the colonial legal system.

While Dutch jurists in colonial Java had increasingly criticized those features of the colonial state that went against their ideal of the rule of law, they were simultaneously essential to maintaining the unjust colonial state and giving legal grounds to the politics of difference. This chapter has shown that if we had only focused on the ideas as expressed by the

jurists in their writings, we would have detected the theoretical emphasis on the rule of law. The reality of the courtroom, however, shows that the belief in a balance of powers was made subsidiary to the belief in the superior Western legal mind. Legal education in the Netherlands and the colonial system in Java moulded a colonial mind and shaped colonial liberalism. After arriving in the colonial courtroom, Dutch jurists safeguarded their own sphere of influence and further confirmed the colonial rule. Instead of a rule of law, they established a rule of lawyers.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank the editors, Alicia Schrikker and the other participants of the Visions of Dutch Empire conference for their comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. The research for this chapter was financed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).
2. Historians Wim van den Doel and Heather Sutherland each analysed one of the two branches of the dual system. Hubrecht W. van den Doel, *De Stille Macht: Het Europese Binnenlands Bestuur op Java en Madoera 1808–1942* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1994); Heather A. Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transformation of the Javanese Priyayi* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979). For a dynamic approach of the encounters between the Dutch and Javanese side of the colonial civil service in the nineteenth century see Onghokham, *The Residency of Madiun: Priyayi and Peasant in the Nineteenth Century* (PhD dissertation, New Haven: Yale University, 1975); ibid., ‘Social Change in Madiun (East Java) During the Nineteenth Century: Taxes and Its Influence on Landholding,’ in *Proceedings Seventh IAHA Conference, 22–26 August 1977, Bangkok* 1 (1977): 616–641.
3. Sanne Ravensbergen, ‘Anchors of Colonial Rule: Pluralistic Courts in Java, c.1803–1848,’ *Itinerario* 42, no. 2 (2018): 238–255.
4. M.C. Piepers, *Macht tegen recht: de vervolging der justitie in Nederlandsch Indie* (Batavia: Van Dorp & Co., 1884), 132, 153; ‘Het atavisme der O.I. Compagnie en van het kultuurstelsel,’ *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië* 2 (1884): 401–437.
5. Cees Fasseur, ‘Violence and Dutch Rule in Mid-Nineteenth Century Java,’ Paper Presented at the Workshop *Violence in Indonesia: Its Historical Roots and Contemporary Manifestations*, Leiden (2000), 10–11.
6. For the idea of intermediate thoughts and empire, see Emma Rothschild, ‘Language and Empire, c.1800,’ *Historical Research* 78 (2005): 208–229, 223–226; Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Lives of Empire: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

7. Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Lauren Benton, ‘International Legal Theory: Made in Empire: Finding the History of International Law in Imperial Locations,’ *Leiden Journal of International Law* 31 (2018): 473–478.
8. Andrew Fitzmaurice, ‘The Dutch Empire in Intellectual History,’ *BMGN Low Countries Historical Review* 132, no. 2 (2017): 107–108. See also Alicia Schrikker’s chapter in this volume.
9. Henk te Velde, ‘The Organization of Liberty: Dutch Liberalism as a Case of the History of European Constitutional Liberalism,’ *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, no. 1: 66–68. For an overview of the development of liberalism in the Netherlands: Siep Stuurman, *Wacht op onze daden: het liberalisme en de vernieuwing van de Nederlandse staat* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 1992).
10. Henk te Velde, ‘The Organization of Liberty,’ 68.
11. M.T. Oosterhagen, *Machtenscheiding: een onderzoek naar de rol van Machtenscheidingstheorieën. In oudere Nederlandse constituties, 1798–1848* (Deventer: Gouda Quint, 2000), 124–125.
12. Oosterhagen, *Machtenscheiding*, 180, 222.
13. Roel Pieterman, *De plaats van de rechter in Nederland 1813–1920: Politiek juridische ideeënstrijd over de scheiding van machten in de staat* (Arnhem: Gouda Quint, 1990), 79–81.
14. Martin Wiener, *An Empire on Trial: Race, Murder, and Justice Under British Rule, 1870–1935* (New York etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1; Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj: The New Cambridge History of India* III, no. 4 (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 27.
15. Wiener, *An Empire on Trial*, 4–6.
16. Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11.
17. See for example: Marilyn Lake, ‘Equality and Exclusion: The Racial Constitution of Colonial Liberalism,’ *Thesis Eleven* 95, no. 1 (2008): 20–32; Uday Singh Mehta, ‘Liberal Strategies of Exclusion,’ in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Fredrick Cooper and Ann Stoler, 59–86 (Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, 1997); Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 28–65; and Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire the Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
18. Alicia Schrikker, ‘Restoration in Java 1815–1830,’ *Low Countries Historical Review (BMGN)* 130, no. 4 (2015): 132–144.
19. See for example: G.D. Willinck, *Desa-politie en justitie* (Semarang-Cheribon: A. Bisschop, 1897), 1–2.

20. A.J. Immink, *De Regterlijke Organisatie van Nederlandsch-Indië* (The Hague: Stemberg, 1882), 4–7.
21. Immink, *De Regterlijke organisatie*, 9.
22. Dutch National Archives (NL-HaNA), The Hague, 2.10.02 MvK 1850–1900, Vb. February 7, 1867, no. 8. Letter from Mirandolle to Attorney General Rappard. Biography: www.parlement.com (last accessed 13 April 2019).
23. NL-HaNA, 2.10.02 MvK 1850–1900, Vb. February 7, 1867, no. 8. Letter from circuit court judge J. Sibenius Trip to attorney general Rappard. Rembang, November 24, 1862; Letter from circuit court judge W. Diemont to attorney general Rappard. Batavia, December 27, 1862.
24. NL-HaNA, 2.10.02 MvK 1850–1900, Vb. February 7, 1867, no. 8. Letter from Mirandolle to Attorney General Rappard.
25. See for example: C.J.F. Mirandolle, ‘De hervorming der rechtsbedeling in Indie II: De Landraden,’ *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 1 (1867): 163–174; C.J.F. Mirandolle, ‘De hervorming der rechtsbedeling in Indie I: De Policie-rol,’ *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie* 1 (1867): 14–24.
26. [Editors], *Indisch Weekblad van het Recht* 1 (4-7-1863): 1–3.
27. NL-HaNA, 2.10.02 MvK 1850–1900, Vb. February 7, 1867, no. 8. Letters from the residents: Resident of Kedu, G.M. van de Graaff. Magelang, March 11, 1863; Resident O. van Rees of Surabaya, March 4, 1863; Resident Tijzelaar of Rembang. Rembang, March 24, 1863.
28. H.L.E. de Waal, *De invloed der kolonisatie op het inlandsche recht in Nederlandsch Oost Indië* (Haarlem: G. Van den Berg, 1880), 104.
29. NL-HaNA, 2.10.02 MvK 1850–1900, Vb. December 17, 1906, no. 19.
30. Cees Fasseur, *De Indologen: Ambtenaren voor de Oost 1825–1950* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2003), 149–150, 242–246.
31. Fasseur, *De Indologen*, 238, 242, 248. In the early twentieth century a similar shortage occurred, and between 1904 and 1922 the large number of 146 jurists were appointed after three years of ‘desk service’ in the colony.
32. Fasseur, *De Indologen*, 200.
33. Fasseur, *De Indologen*, 117; Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 57–72.
34. Fasseur, *De Indologen*, 288–289. He would work as an inspector of indigenous education, and was discriminated against by his colleagues.
35. A.W.H. Massier, *Van ‘recht’ naar ‘hukum’: Indonesische juristen en hun taal, 1915–2000* (PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2003) [transl. and published: *The Voice of the Law in Transition: Indonesian Jurists and Their Languages, 1915–2000* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2008)], 78, 105 (footnote 238).

36. P.H. van der Kemp, ‘De rechterlijke macht in haar streven naar onafhankelijkheid en in haren afkeervan het BB,’ *De Indische Gids* 1 (1885): 445–481.
37. A.J. Immink, *Iets over de tegenwoordige afhankelijkheid van de Nederlandsch Indische rechterlijke ambtenaren* (Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1880); Cees Fasseur, ‘Immink, Adrianus Johannes (1838–1914),’ in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*. <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn4/immink>.
38. Immink, *Iets over de tegenwoordige afhankelijkheid*, 19. The name of the chief jaksa is not mentioned in the article.
39. Immink, *Iets over de tegenwoordige afhankelijkheid*, 3–5, 14. According to article 94 of the 1854 Colonial Constitution (*Regeeringsreglement*), the Supreme Court members were unimpeachable, but this did not apply to other judicial officials.
40. Sanne Ravensbergen, *Courtrooms of Conflict: Criminal Law, Local Elites and Legal Pluralities in Colonial Java* (PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2018), 270–276.
41. Marieke Bloembergen, *De koloniale vertoning: Nederland en Indië op de wereldtentoonstellingen (1880–1931)* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2002), 58.
42. Van den Doel, *De Stille Macht*, 103.
43. Piepers, *Macht tegen recht*, 355.
44. Mirandolle, ‘De hervorming der rechtsbedeeling in Indie II: De Landraden,’ 163–174.
45. Achmad Djajadiningrat, *Herinneringen van Pangeran Aria Achmad Djajadiningrat* (Amsterdam etc.: Kolff, 1936), 38, 52.
46. The Indies Organisation for Jurists (Indische Juristenvereeniging) was re-established in 1913.
47. De Waal, *De invloed der kolonisatie op het inlandsche recht*, 105–106.
48. D. Mounier, ‘Iets over de Landraadvoritzters op Java en Madoera,’ *Indisch Genootschap, algemene vergadering* (27-3-1900): 141–146, 146.
49. The minutes say Adiningrat, but it was Hadiningrat who wrote a proposal for the improvement of the education of Javanese priyayi.
50. Mounier, ‘Iets over de Landraadvoritzters op Java en Madoera,’ *Indisch Genootschap, algemene vergadering* (27-3-1900): 153.
51. C.J. Hasselman, ‘Pangeran Ario Hadiningrat, een Javaansch pionier,’ *De Gids* (1915) jrg. 79, no. 8: 249–300.
52. Hadiningrat, ‘De achteruitgang van het prestige van de inlandse ambtenaren en de middelen om daar verbetering in aan te brengen,’ *Tijdschrift voor Binnenlandsch Bestuur* 3 (1899): 367–385, 380–382.
53. Response to proposal Mounier by C. Th. Van Deventer, *Indisch Genootschap, Algemene Vergadering* (27-3-1900): 161.

54. Response to proposal Mounier by Maclaine Pont, *Indisch Genootschap, Algemene Vergadering* (27-3-1900): 162–163.
55. W. Boekhoudt, ‘Een afscheidsgroet aan mijn jongere collega’s,’ *Het Indisch Tijdschrift voor het recht* 107 (1-5-1915): 333–334.
56. J. Sibenius Trip, ‘Herinneringen uit de Inlandsche Rechtspraak,’ *Indisch Weekblad van het Recht*, no. 2168 (16-1-1905): 1–21.
57. For developments in the Dutch public prosecution service, see A.G. Bosch, ‘Het Openbaar Ministerie in de periode van 1811–1838,’ in *Twee eeuwen Openbaar Ministerie*, ed. A.G. Bosch, P.M. Frieling, G.C. Haverkate, M.E. de Meijer, and L. Plas (The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers/Openbaar Ministerie, 2011).
58. Alfons Johan Driessen, *Schets der werkzaamheden in strafzaken van den Nederlandsch-Indischenambtenaar van het Openbaar Ministerie* (Amsterdam: Brinkman & Zoon, 1897), 242–253.
59. Van der Kemp, ‘De rechterlijke macht in haar streven naar onafhankelijkheid,’ 445–481. “O, zeker! Als men over dergelijke hulpmiddelen beschikt, wordt het rechtspreken over den inlander door met het volk onbekende geleerden nog zoo moeilijk niet.”
60. Wilhelmus Albertus Johannes van Davelaar, *Het strafproces in zaken van misdrijf op de terechtzitting van de landraden op Java en Madura vergelijken met de Nederland en Nederlandsch-Indische strafvordering* (Leiden: Van Doesburgh, 1884), 39–40.
61. *Indisch Staatsblad* 1885, no. 81.
62. A.J.C.E. van Heijcop ten Ham, *De Berechting van Civiele Zaken en van Misdrijven op de Terechtzitting der Landraden op Java en Madoera* (Leiden: Van Doesburgh, 1888), 82.
63. J.J.C. Gaijmans, *De Landraden op Java en Madura rechtsprekende in Zaken van Misdrijf* (Batavia: Van Dorp, 1874), 34–35.
64. Indisch Staatsblad 1898, no. 66; H.A. Idema *Leerboek van het landraad-strafprocesrecht in zaken van misdrijf* (Leiden: Brill, 1938), 72.
65. H.A. Idema, ‘Indische Juristen Winckel, Piepers, der Kinderen. Iets uit den Strijd om de Legaliteit,’ *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde* 100, no. 1 (1941): 173–233, 195–203.
66. Indisch Familiearchief, The Hague, 8 Familie Huetting. Letter from Cornelis Star Nauta Carsten to his father A.J. Carsten. Blitar, April 7, 1920.

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CHAPTER 9

The Glass House Revisited: Radio Broadcasting and the Blind Spots in the Late Colonial State in the Netherlands Indies, 1920s and 1930s

Vincent Kuitenbrouwer

In discussing the nature of the late colonial state in the Netherlands Indies several authors have referred to the glass house-metaphor of the Indonesian novel-writer Pramudya Ananta Toer. In his majestic tetralogy about a fictive Indonesian nationalist who is watched, detained and exiled by the secret colonial police, Toer invokes this term to describe the archive that the colonial state keeps on the nationalist movement. In the last book the narrator, a high-ranking officer of Indonesian descent, studies the bulky files of collected data and imagines himself observing the nationalists in a ‘glass house’ on his desk where, no matter how they try to hide, he can follow their every move as a ‘little deity’ (*kleine godheid*).¹ In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson praises this passage

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as a powerful image of ‘total surveyability’ of the colonial state.² Others have also referred to Toer’s description as an inspiration to argue that the security apparatus of the Netherlands Indies strived for complete transparency in a bid to uphold the societal status quo of what was in fact a police state.³

In a later essay, however, Anderson added an analytical layer to his interpretation of Toer’s masterpiece, pointing to an ironic but crucial twist at the end of the novel series. After the tragic death of the hero of the story, who is mentally destroyed by his pursuers, the previously mentioned secret-police officer appears to have been obsessed by his victim and ‘openly suggests here and there that he has tampered with the documents and in the files, which therefore no longer be confidently assigned an uncontaminated truth’.⁴ This interpretation of the glass house-metaphor, addressing the limits of transparency and control, invites to rethink the blind spots of the late colonial regime and its subsequent inability to cope with the anti-colonial movement, which eluded the categories that had been created by the people who wanted to maintain the status quo and control the colonial public sphere. This premise is central to this contribution on colonial radio broadcasting, which explores the visions of empire that accompanied the introduction of wireless technology in the Indonesian archipelago in the 1920s and the broadcasting practices of the medium-wave radio company NIROM (*Nederlands-Indische Radio Omroep Maatschappij*) in the 1930s.

The existing historiography on radio broadcasting in the Netherlands Indies mainly focusses on institutionalization. René Witte has written the most extensive monograph on the topic so far in which he provides a detailed overview of the judicial, political and commercial environment of colonial radio in the Indies, in which NIROM took a central position.⁵ Taking a cultural perspective, Rudolf Mrázek has shown that the advent of the wireless, like other new technologies at the time, had a profound impact on identity-formation and—politics in late colonial Indonesia, as it was a potent symbol of modernity.⁶ Both these authors show how different groups, both defending and challenging the colonial status quo, tried to use radio broadcasting to achieve their goals. Indeed, publications about later periods confirm that the medium became an important instrument of the Indonesian nationalists during the decolonization war, 1945–1949⁷ and also in the latter half of the twentieth century, radio remained an important, yet contested, form of mass communication in the Republic of Indonesia.⁸

This essay builds on these notions in the historiography and shows the ways in which ideas of Dutch radio makers related to the day-to-day practices of NIROM. The first part discusses, to paraphrase Marshall McLuhans famous aphorism, the ‘message of the medium’ to see how in the 1920s the colonial elite’s visions on radio broadcasting were intertwined with the political context at the time, in which the rise of anti-colonial nationalism in the wake of the First World War was a key factor. In this contentious atmosphere, the colonial authorities and their supporters emphasized the importance of ‘neutrality’ in the ether. This concept had multiple meanings for Dutch policymakers in the inter-war years, referring to the external relations of the Netherlands and the internal dynamics of political and media networks in the Dutch sphere of influence.⁹ This contribution will focus on the latter meaning of ‘neutrality’, which was a concept to manage the public sphere where different political groups interacted. In the Netherlands laws allowed the four major political-ideological currents, the so-called ‘pillars’ (*zuilen*), to have their own radio-corporations (*omroepen*), which contributed to a pluriform media landscape. The proprietors of NIROM, supported by colonial authorities, tried to prevent this from happening in the Indies by installing a monopoly because they feared that ‘party propaganda’ would imperil public order. In practice this type of ‘neutrality’ was difficult to achieve, however, because more varied groups wanted access to the company’s frequencies than originally envisioned. By the time the NIROM broadcasts started in 1934, it was particularly the larger-than-expected interest of Indonesians in radio that shattered the colonial dream of a depoliticized space in the ether.

The latter part of this contribution delves deeper into these complexities by analysing the discussions about the NIROM-programme amongst members of the company’s *Raad van Advies* (Advisory Council). This body was installed by the colonial government to act as a liaison between radio-owners in the Netherlands Indies and NIROM and, increasingly important, to oversee that the broadcasts did not imperil social order. To do so this essay analyses the reports of the first fifty meetings of the Advisory Council of the NIROM (April 1934–February 1938), stencilled copies of which are being kept in the Library of Leiden University.¹⁰ A key-premise in the discussions amongst the members of the *Raad* was the division between ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ listeners which also was the foundation of NIROM’s broadcasting strategy. At first sight this categorization seems to reflect a pristine colonial mentality,

based on a rigid social taxonomy to defend the existing power hierarchies. However, a close reading of the primary source material reveals that radio practices in the Netherlands Indies did not fit these rigid categories. Ironically, the initial visions on wireless technology in the Dutch empire created blind spots in the glass house of the colonial controlling mechanism of radio broadcasting.

RADIO-TECHNOLOGY AND THE IDEA OF ‘EMPIRE UNITY’

The advent of wireless radio communication in the Dutch empire has its roots in the First World War. Although the Netherlands succeeded in retaining a neutral position towards the warring powers, the conflict affected Dutch colonial communications. The British installed a naval blockade and effectively blocked all messages transmitted via the telegraphy submarine cable running to the Indonesian archipelago, which they controlled. The blockade of the Dutch intercontinental lines of communication caused social unrest in the Indies. It caused disruption of exports and imports, resulting in rising unemployment and food shortages in several parts of the archipelago, which in some cases caused severe riots.¹¹ The nascent Indonesian nationalist movement seized on this momentum, became more organized, and pushed for change in the political system. The isolated Governor-General in Batavia gave into some of the nationalists' demands for reforms in 1918. The most substantial result of this episode was the installation of the *Volksraad* in 1919, a proto-Parliament which included different population groups. In turn these reforms caused a conservative backlash.¹² In both the Netherlands and the Indies various pundits argued to bolster the colonial order and strengthen the ties between the two parts of the empire.¹³

In the early 1920s the proponents of colonial order and unity were optimistic about their cause, hailing the technological innovations that profoundly changed the Dutch colonial communication lines at the time, which contributed to the idea that ‘motherland’ and ‘colony’ were brought more closely together. One of the major developments was in shortwave radio technology. Considering shortwave radio-technology private companies were on the forefront, in which the Philips company in Eindhoven played a crucial role after it entered the highly competitive consumer-market with radio-lamps and receiving sets in the mid-1920s. To support its production lines, Philips started to experiment with long-range transmissions to open up new markets and to enhance

the reputation of its brand amongst radio enthusiasts.¹⁴ In March 1927 a breakthrough occurred when engineers at the Philips laboratories transmitted the signal of a gramophone record they played in front of a microphone and to their surprise they received a telegram from a radio-amateur in Bandung who had picked up the signal loud and clear. It was the first time that sound had been transmitted across the world via the wireless, a feat that was celebrated in the following months. CEO Anton Philips personally arranged several prestigious experimental broadcasts that were front-page news across the globe, including royal speeches by Queen Wilhelmina and Princess Juliana.¹⁵

After this marketing success, Anton Philips initiated various commercial broadcasting initiatives aimed at the Indonesian archipelago. He raised funds for these projects amongst a group of high-powered investors, connected to colonial trading-companies and banks, known in secondary literature as the ‘colonial lobby’.¹⁶ Although it seems that the main motives of Philips himself were commercial (trying to open up overseas markets for his products),¹⁷ the people he associated with had clear political and ideological motives. They feared that social, emancipatory reforms in the Indies would lead to the ‘loss’ of this Dutch colony, which they argued would greatly harm both countries—a sentiment captured in the phrase ‘Indies torn calamity born’. Instead they argued for a closer union and a strong and repressive policy against anti-colonial nationalism in the Indies in order to secure the colonial societal status quo. This principle became known as the ‘rijkseenheid-gedachte’ (the idea of empire unity).¹⁸

Building on this ideological foundation the investors envisioned that radio should be used to strengthen the ‘Dutch’ element in the Indies, by bolstering the connection between ‘the motherland’ and the expat-community in the archipelago. The main audience, so they expected, would be Western colonials anyway, as they were the only group in the archipelago that could actually afford to buy radio-sets. Another key-principle that was forwarded by the colonial lobby was that the radio-broadcasts for the Indies should be ‘neutral’ in the sense that they should not contain ‘party propaganda’ from the main Dutch domestic radio-corporations (*omroepen*). These corporations were closely connected to the different ideological ‘pillars’ in Dutch society—Catholic, Protestant and Socialist. The idea was that exporting such political divisions, known as ‘pillarisation’, to the Indies would be detrimental to the foundations of colonial order as it would divide the Dutch colonial elite and,

in addition, would enable certain groups of Indonesians, mainly the Muslims, to demand more political rights.¹⁹

With these principles in mind, the *Philips Omroep Holland Indië* (Philips Broadcasting Company Holland Indies, or PHOHI) was founded in the Summer of 1927, with a starting capital of 700,000 guilders. This station was meant to broadcast from the Netherlands to the Indies via shortwave frequencies.²⁰ In addition the Philips radio-consortium started working with Radio-Holland, a commercial company that (in cooperation with other parties, including the *Indische PTT*) operated wireless stations in the Indies from the early 1920s onwards, providing telegraph and telephone services. In December 1928 these parties raised a sum of 375,000 guilders to start a medium-wave radio broadcasting station in the archipelago the aforementioned *Nederlandsch-Indische Omroep Maatschappij* (Dutch Indies Broadcasting Company, or NIROM).²¹ During the years that followed, both these broadcasting initiatives were bogged down by technological challenges and political discussions about the terms under which concessions would be granted by the governments in The Hague (to PHOHI) and Batavia (to NIROM).

One major conflict erupted over the question of radio license fees in the Indies, an existing legal arrangement in the colony that required all owners of radio-sets to register at the local post office and pay a monthly sum of money. Both NIROM and PHOHI claimed that they had the right to use these fees as a source of income. Although the two radio-companies were part of the same investors' portfolio, this issue caused a divide between them, which grew over the years.²² Another paralyzing issue was the question of neutrality, as an ordering principle for the media landscape. In the Netherlands the pillarized radio-corporations, via a strong Parliamentary lobby, demanded airtime on the PHOHI-transmitters, something that was vehemently opposed by the members of the colonial lobby and the administrative elites at Batavia, who vented their opinion via the Ministry of Colonial Affairs. The main fear of these men was that the Socialist VARA would reach listeners in the Indies and stir up revolutionary sentiments. The situation led to a stalemate in the political process in the Netherlands, during which PHOHI was not able to air a regular programme, until a compromise was reached in 1932. During this intermezzo, the colonial government in Batavia decided to grant the monopoly on license fees to NIROM as they thought that this company would be able to keep 'party propaganda' from entering the colonial airwaves.²³

As a result, the article on broadcasting in the NIROM-concession, which was approved by the *Volksraad* in 1930, contained the following requirements from the colonial government in the Indies. On the one hand NIROM, which was funded by radio-license fees, ‘has to strive to accommodate the needs and wishes of the listening public’. On the other hand, ‘the broadcasts [*omroepstof*] cannot be in violation of the interests of the state, the laws of the Land, public order or common decency’.²⁴ These two parameters contained an inherent tension which raised the question whether NIROM had to work from the bottom-up or from the top-down. In order to address this tension and to ensure control over the broadcasts, members of the *Volksraad* successfully proposed the installment of an Advisory Council (*Raad van Advies*) consisting of members elected by the listeners and appointed representatives of the *Indische PTT*, one of whom presided. The Council met once a month with the programme-manager of NIROM to discuss the broadcasting schedules before they were aired and to evaluate previous broadcasts, after which it advised the Director of Infrastructure to approve the future NIROM-schedule or not.²⁵ In this system, the *Indische PTT*, which also owned the transmission stations operated by NIROM and collected the license fees via the post offices, became a pivot between the colonial administration, NIROM and the listeners.

Despite the approval of the NIROM-concession in 1930, it would take several years before the broadcasting company could start a regular transmission via medium-wave transmissions, due to the fact that it had to invest a lot of money and time in building antenna parks to ensure it could reach the whole of the archipelago.²⁶ Meanwhile, a growing number of amateurs in the Indies had started to become active in the ether, especially in Java. In the major cities on that island amateur radio clubs, with members of various ethnic backgrounds, were founded in the early 1930s and these stations operated quite professionally, airing regular broadcasts suited to the tastes of local radio enthusiasts. In addition, representatives of Christian denominations in the Indies started their own radio-corporations that were aimed to connect different communities of believers in the archipelago—both Protestant (NICRO) and Catholic (IKROS). Their main activity was to lobby for airtime for religious broadcasts on the different local stations. As a result, by the time NIROM started its central broadcasts, it had to deal with this decentralized radio-landscape. Although the company received government backing to withstand furious protests from the radio clubs and corporations

against the implementation of the license fees-monopoly, NIROM was forced to allow these organizations airtime on its frequencies.²⁷

The main disjunction between the original vision behind NIROM, deriving from the *Rijkseenheid*-ideal, and radio practices in the 1930s was that the medium did not only attract Dutch expatriates in the Indies, but also various groups of Asian descent. One of the main drivers behind the growing Indonesian interest in radio was the SRV (*Solo Radio Vereeniging*) radio club in the Javanese town Solo, which was founded in 1932 by the local prince. This wealthy radio enthusiast facilitated broadcasting from his palace (*kraton*) with the main goal to promote Javanese high culture, such as *gamelan*-music and *wajang*-plays, via the ether.²⁸ Also in other radio clubs in Java (such as Batavia, Bandung and Surabaya) non-Western radio-amateurs, alongside Dutch ones, founded clubs and developed radio-formats to suit their cultural tastes, which ranged from elitist and traditionalistic forms of art and religion (mainly Islamic) to popular modernistic music. Although in 1934 the number of registered radio-sets owned by ‘Easterners’, mainly Indonesians (designated as ‘natives’) and Chinese (designated as ‘foreign Easterners’), was still significantly smaller than the number of radio-sets owned by those registered as ‘Western’, Dutch expatriates and Eurasians, this discrepancy was becoming smaller and, in fact, had dissolved by 1940.²⁹ As all owners of radio-sets were required to pay a license-fee that was used to finance NIROM, the company was legally obliged to take the preferences of the various groups of ‘Eastern’ listeners into account alongside the wishes of ‘Westerners’.

This development had a significant impact on the day-to-day operations of NIROM soon after it started broadcasting. After a campaign from the *Volksraad*-member Sutardjo Kertohadikusumo demanding more radio for Indonesians, the company split its broadcasts into a ‘Western broadcasting programme’ (*Westersche omroep*) and an ‘Eastern broadcasting programme’ (*Oostersche omroep*) in September 1934. The two stations operated on different frequencies so that they could transmit different broadcasts at the same time.³⁰ The idea was that in this way all population groups in the Indies could be provided with prime time broadcasts they liked, without being confronted with radio that they did not like. On paper this strict categorization of the ether provided a tidy compromise that promoted an image of a well-structured colonial order in the Indies in which everybody had a separate place. The reality, however, was tickler as it proved difficult to make strict demarcations

between the different categories. This complexity was reflected in the discussions amongst the members of the NIROM Advisory Board as appears in the minutes of their meetings, which will be analysed in the next paragraphs. As will be shown, not only the initial idea that radio in the Indies would be a Western medium proved to be false, also the second foundation of the initial vision on colonial radio was contentious as ‘neutrality’ proved to be a highly problematic principle.

ENVISIONING THE NIROM

The *Raad van Advies* was installed in the same month NIROM started broadcasting, in April 1934. At the inaugural meeting, the Director of Infrastructure (*Verkeer and Waterstaat*) explained the mandate of the Council in a speech to the members. He emphasized the need of this body by referring to the ‘vague’ requirement in the NIROM concession that the company had to accommodate the ‘needs and wishes’ of the listening public. Echoing the ambivalence of the NIROM-concession, he pointed out that, considering the ‘heterogeneous population’ in the Dutch East Indies, this meant that the *Raad* should take into account the preferences of all ‘currents’ (*stroomingen*) in public opinion and at the same time should be careful to prevent that ‘the existing tensions are sharpened as a result of polemical exchanges of ideas’.³¹ This paternalistic emphasis on the societal responsibility of the *Raad* was echoed in later meetings. In a speech welcoming new members, on 1 May 1936, the chairman of the *Raad* talked about ‘helmsmanship’ (*stuurmanskunst*) in this respect.³² This metaphor illustrates the idea, prevalent amongst the members of the *Raad*, that their main task was to manage the different broadcasts of NIROM to ensure radio would contribute to the stability of the colonial order. In addition, one of its members argued in 1937 that, although NIROM had to take into account the views of the listening public paying license fees, it also had a ‘cultural task [...] to prevent moral decay’.³³

This elitist attitude, that revealed a sense of civilizing mission, bore heavily on the relation of the *Raad* with the listening public in the Netherlands Indies. As it was required to represent the wishes and needs of the radio-owners, the *Raad*, together with NIROM and the *Indische PTT* organized surveys, but the response was not very high with barely half of those who had been asked responding.³⁴ In addition the *Raad* welcomed letters from listeners and discussed every one that came in.

To generate interest the Council distributed press statements, but this did not result in a great response amongst radio owners.³⁵ The Council never received more than half a dozen letters a month and over time the number decreased. It appeared that listeners rather wrote to NIROM itself with praise or complaints.³⁶ In addition, critical listeners occasionally aired their frustrations about certain elements of the NIROM broadcasts in letters to newspapers. The tone of these letters was often polemical, echoing the general tenor of the press in the Indies, which has been characterized as the ‘tropical style’ (*tropenstijl*).³⁷ Usually the NIROM was the main target of criticism in these publications, which were sometimes discussed by the members of the *Raad* who showed their dismay about the ‘witch-hunt’ (*hetze*).³⁸

The composition of the *Raad* reflected a top-down way of thinking too. Although the majority of members of the council were elected by the radio owners, it did not provide a representative cross-section of listeners in the archipelago. All the members of the *Raad* lived in Java, were male and belonged to the upper middle classes or higher. In addition, they were all connected to institutions with a stake in colonial radio broadcasting. As the amateur clubs were allowed airtime on the NIROM transmissions, people representing them were directly involved in the composition of the programme they had to assess. This institutional bias of the *Raad* is best illustrated by the fact that the influential director of the *Indische PTT*, C. Hillen, acted as (appointed) chairman and played a steering role in the meetings: informing members about official facts and figures and expressing his view in discussions on the contents of the broadcasts.³⁹ In addition the programme-manager of the NIROM was always present at the meetings of the *Raad*. He actively joined the discussions, not shying away of venting his opinions, even when this led to conflicts with the elected members of the Council.

The other members of the *Raad*, who were elected via mail, were all related to radio organizations that could muster grassroot support.⁴⁰ There were several (over time composition fluctuated) Dutch representatives from radio clubs and cultural institutions in the large cities of Java (Batavia, Bandung and Surabaya). In addition, prominent representatives of the two Christian radio-corporations were members of the *Raad* from the start, C.J.M. van der Linden (Catholic) and C.C. van Helsdingen (Protestant). The latter was an influential member of the *Volksraad* which had initiated the plan for the Advisory Council in the first place.⁴¹ In the first two years, one member in the *Raad* represented the ‘native’

listeners: Wiranata Kusuma, a Javanese prince with a prominent position in colonial politics as a member of the *Volksraad* and *regent* of Bandung. From the meeting reports it appears that he contributed regularly to NIROM broadcasts, giving talks about Islam and colonial politics. After the election in 1936 the 'Eastern' contingent in the *Raad* was enlarged with a Javanese representative of the Solo radio club SRV and a Chinese radio-amateur connected to several non-Western clubs in Java.

This extension of the *Raad* shows the growing importance of the 'Eastern broadcasting programme' for NIROM and, indeed, for the colonial public sphere as a whole. Regular reports of the *Indische PTT* on radio-registrations in the first years of NIROM operations showed that, although in absolute numbers the 'Western' listeners were still a majority, the proportion of 'Eastern' license-holders was growing steadily. Reflecting on this trend, the chairman of the *Raad* predicted in 1937 that within four years 'the Eastern broadcasting programme will include 50% of the listeners'.⁴² As a result NIROM increasingly invested in the development of the 'Eastern broadcasting programme', both in terms of airtime as in facilities to enable high-quality content.⁴³ The growth of this type of broadcasting was elaborately discussed by the members of the *Raad*, who wanted to keep a good overall balance on the NIROM airwaves, striving for neutrality and societal order. Key to these deliberations was the demarcation between 'Western' and 'Eastern', which on first sight might have been a very clear categorization, but in fact was quite porous.

As has been noted by several authors the main idea behind the division between the 'Western' and 'Eastern' broadcasting programmes, that were transmitted on different frequencies, was that they could be aired at the same time without them interfering with each other.⁴⁴ This premise provided the fundament of the activities the *Raad* which already became clear at the first meeting when it was stated as a matter of fact that 'Western' listeners did not appreciate 'Eastern' broadcasts.⁴⁵ Also in later meetings this issue surfaced when it appeared that 'Western' listeners complained about hearing *gamelan*-performances on the background of their broadcasts, which prompted calls for better studio-walls.⁴⁶

There were certain 'national' moments, however, when the members of the *Raad* approved a joint broadcasting schedule, such as New Year, birthdays of members of the Dutch Royal House, and the opening of the Parliamentary year in The Hague. At these moments speeches of Dutch dignitaries were not only broadcast on the 'Western' frequencies, but

also via the ‘Eastern’ ones. After complaints that the ‘Eastern’ listeners could not understand the original versions, the *Bureau voor Volkslectuur* (Bureau of Popular Literature) provided Malay translations which were read by colonial dignitaries.⁴⁷ In later years, several Eastern groups, such as Muslims and Chinese, also demanded more attention for their holidays on radio. At these occasions the ‘Western broadcasting programme’ was adapted too.⁴⁸ These deliberations about the schedule show that in practice there was interaction between the two broadcasting programmes of NIROM that had not been originally envisioned. How did this situation influence the debates in the *Raad* on specific broadcasting formats?

DISCUSSING THE NIROM BROADCASTS

Based on samples from the NIROM radio guide, Witte has estimated that 79% of the company’s broadcasts was devoted to music and 21% to talk-radio.⁴⁹ A listeners’ survey from 1936 indicated that the radio-owners agreed with this schedule and many of them even wanted less talk and more music. Discussing this result the members of the *Raad* took this preference of radio listeners in the Indies as a given.⁵⁰ At times however, certain members did complain about this situation because they thought that high-quality radio-lectures could improve the standard of the NIROM programme. At the same time, spoken word broadcasts were considered to be quite risky by the *Raad* because this type of broadcasting could easily contain ‘party-propaganda’—something that was to be prevented at all costs as this could stir up societal tensions and imperil the colonial order.⁵¹ In addition, religious statements with a negative reference to other denominations were also taboo.

From various meeting reports, it appears that members of the *Raad* closely scrutinized spoken word broadcasts for this reason. Sometimes one or two members read selected texts beforehand and on a few occasions, they even ordered a broadcast to be banned, such as a performance of the play *Joanne of Arc* by Bernard Shaw that was considered to be offensive towards Catholics.⁵² Most of the control on spoken word, however, happened afterwards. The majority of complaints from the members were about ‘Western’ cabaret shows that were considered to be indecent, because they contained sexual references or ‘seaman’s language’.⁵³ At times the problems were of a political nature, such as insults aimed at Chinese people by an Indonesian theatre group on the ‘Eastern broadcasting programme’. After the troupe repeated this offence they

were banned from performing on NIROM.⁵⁴ Such incidents at various occasions triggered the question to what extent the *Raad* should exert censorship, such as during a meeting in December 1934.⁵⁵ The members of the *Raad*, including the chairman and the NIROM-representative, were reluctant about imposing systematic censorship because of the costs. In addition, the representatives of the Christian corporations argued that there was enough ‘self-discipline’ (*zelf-tucht*) amongst the broadcasters. It was the only Indonesian member of the *Raad* at the time, Wiranata Kusuma, who made a forceful statement in favour of more censorship comparing radio with a ‘public meeting’ but without the police present to intervene when things got out of hand.⁵⁶

Notwithstanding the poetic beauty of Kusuma’s metaphor, there in fact was a police-force present at the broadcasting studio’s: the NIROM-staff. If they found that a broadcast was in violation of the terms of the concession they could take it off air, a practice that had the support of the *Raad*. And just like the real police in the Indies at that time, initially most attention went to Indonesians, particularly Muslims, who represented a potent political force in Java. Addressing this issue, the NIROM programme-manager said that during Islamic talks ‘native’ personnel were instructed to ‘turn off the tap as soon as broadcasts cross the bounds of what is permitted’. Kusuma, who was a leading figure in the Muslim community in West-Java, applauded this measure and stood in close contact with the NIROM-management to advise them on Islamic talks.⁵⁷ In this way he ensured that only moderate speakers, including himself, would be broadcasting on NIROM. He described his talks (not without pride) as ‘Mohammedan-religious lectures [...] in a very universalistic style’.⁵⁸ To uphold such a close scrutiny of all talks on the ‘Eastern broadcasting programme’, however, was not an easy task for NIROM and the programme-manager indicated that there was a shortage of staff (most of whom were of Dutch origins) who had the linguistic skills to be able to monitor the broadcasts ‘in other languages than Dutch’. He therefore simply proposed to limit these broadcasts, effectively cutting down the amount of talk-radio on the ‘Eastern broadcasting programme’. This suggestion was approved by the *Raad*.⁵⁹

On the ‘Western broadcasting programme’ there was more room for talk-radio, but it was also monitored closely. In fact, the most serious incident with a spoken word broadcast took place during a talk of a Catholic priest, for IKROS, in October 1936. The lecture, which addressed the situation in Spain, contained sympathetic remarks about

General Franco. According to the NIROM studio manager on duty these words imperilled the official policy of Dutch geopolitical neutrality too much and he took the live broadcast off air. This matter caused a big row in the following meetings of the *Raad* with the IKROS-representative Van der Linden, supported by a letter from the corporation, lashing out against NIROM. The majority of the *Raad* supported the radio company, however, and the chairman even threatened with heavy censorship-measures against IKROS if the corporation could not prevent such an incident in the future.⁶⁰ Eventually Van der Linden gave in and promised more internal scrutiny to prevent such thing from happening again after which the row ebbed away.⁶¹ Amongst most members of the *Raad*, including the chairman and the NIROM programme-manager, however, there seems to have been a growing mistrust of Christian broadcasts. When a survey in 1937 indicated that the majority of listeners to the 'Western programme' were not positive about the religious (Christian) broadcasts, the programme-manager proposed a severe cut in the airtime of NICRO and IKROS. After a furious defence of both Van der Linden and Van Helsdingen the cuts were limited.⁶² But the message was clear: the majority of the members of the *Raad* wanted to prevent that a pillarized system would emerge on the colonial airwaves as they feared this would cause a 'sharp sectarian struggle' (*vinnige godsdienststrijd*).⁶³

Considering the deliberations on music broadcasts, there were less outspoken political discussions amongst the members of the *Raad*. There was one exception, however, and that was when the Dutch national anthem *Wilhelmus* was raised. During the inaugural meeting of the *Raad* one of the members proposed to play it at the end of every NIROM broadcasting day. The majority of the council opposed this suggestion as would become a 'drag' (*sleur*) which would devalue the song. Instead they recommended that the *Wilhelmus* was played once a week on the 'Western broadcasting programme'.⁶⁴ Later it appeared that the anthem was also vulnerable in another way, as was shown during the live broadcast on the 'Eastern broadcasting programme' of a football match organized by the *Persatoean Sepak Raga Seloeroeh Indonesia* (Football Association of Indonesia or PSSI). When the president of that association, a prince from Solo, entered the field an orchestra played the *Wilhelmus*, after which the crowd started to chant 'Indonesia Raya', the title of the anthem of the anti-colonial movement. During the following meeting of the *Raad* Wiranata Kusuma expressed his great dismay

about this incident and accused NIROM of misjudging the situation as it was apparent that the football-grounds were ‘crawling with “Indonesian nationalists”’. In response, the programme-manager claimed it was a misunderstanding and explained that he paid the orchestra but did not instruct them as he thought PSSI would do that.⁶⁵ The following year NIROM initially did not want to broadcast a live report of the PSSI football match, but after many pleas from ‘native’ listeners it decided to do so after taking ‘special measures to prevent unwanted incidents’.⁶⁶

Although this incident is the only one I could find where the political situation was discussed so explicitly in context of music broadcasts, the members of the *Raad* regularly expressed worries about certain perceived societal effects of music in their deliberations. Considering music on the ‘Western programme’, the main problem seemed to have been banal texts, which were deemed to be harmful for public decency. This problem emerged in different popular genres such as Dutch croons, labelled as *Hollandsche liedjes*, the level of which was rated ‘low’. However, the NIROM programme-manager pointed out that there was a great appreciation and demand for such broadcasts amongst the public, which he used to effectively stop steps from being taken against them.⁶⁷ There seems to have been a slightly different attitude towards jazz music, which was first categorized as ‘popular dance music’ but later became a separate category.⁶⁸ Most members of the *Raad* complained that they wanted less jazz music on NIROM, and one of them even proposed to ban this genre altogether in August 1937. Although the programme-manager indicated that he would not oppose this personally, he indicated that this demand was impossible because jazz was very popular amongst the ‘more mature youth’ (*rijpere jeugd*).⁶⁹ Despite this argument, NIROM did announce a reduction of the hours of jazz music later that year.⁷⁰

In discussions about ‘the Eastern broadcasting programme’ there was a more complex dynamism as the variety of categories of listeners was greater. Even though the *Raad* had quite a specific focus on listeners in Java, it distinguished, broadly speaking, between different ethnic groups on this island with their own tastes: the Javanese, Sundanese and Chinese. In addition, the members of the *Raad* noted clear differences between listeners in the main population centres in different regions of Java: West (Batavia and Bandung), Middle (Solo and Yogyacarta) and East (Surabaya). To get a clearer picture on the preferences of these groups an administrator of the *Indische PTT*, Dr. Haaksma, interviewed

hundreds of ‘Eastern’ listeners at the different locations in 1937. In addition to the various categories mentioned earlier, he drew a main distinction between ‘Javanese’ and ‘Malay’ oriented listeners. The former category mainly consisted of elderly people who enjoyed traditionalistic types of Javanese music, particularly *gamelan*-music. The prime supplier of this type of broadcasts was the SRV in Mid-Java, that was closely connected to the royal courts in that region. Listeners from all regions on Java indicated that these *gamelan* performances were of superior quality and, although they did listen to local orchestra’s, tuned in regularly to these broadcasts.⁷¹

In his description of Malay-oriented listeners Haaksma noted that these people generally belonged to younger generations than the listeners of Javanese high culture broadcasts. And for them modernistic music was the ‘main dish’ (*hoofdschotel*) when listening to radio, particularly the *Krontjong* genre.⁷² In contrast with the Javanese broadcasts, this music-style was mixed, containing elements from European and Asian music traditions. In addition, the musicians, singing in Malay, performed on Western instruments—with the guitar (which was introduced by Portuguese settlers in Timor) being of particular importance. From the start, the members of the *Raad* registered the popularity of *Krontjong* and therefore the prominence of *Krontjong* in the ‘Eastern broadcasting programme’, was never questioned. There was, however, discussion about the relation of this modernistic music broadcasts with the traditionalist ones, which drew a different type of listeners. To accommodate this problem, the *Raad* decided to impose three minutes’ silence between a Muslim prayer-programme and the start of the evening-programme with popular music.⁷³

The rise of *Krontjong* did not only trigger questions about the internal dynamics of the ‘Eastern broadcasting programme’, it also prompted questions about the relation with the ‘Western’ one. The mixed nature of the genre posed hairy questions as how to categorize it, as was shown during a meeting of the *Raad* in December 1934. Discussing the nature of *Krontjong* one of the members argued that the music-style ‘which is of Portuguese origins, is not less Eastern-oriented than jazz music’.⁷⁴ The NIROM management nonetheless tried to impose a clear distinction by assigning *Krontjong* to the ‘Eastern programme’, whilst jazz music was scheduled in the ‘Western programme’. In practice, however, listeners switched between the two transmissions to hear the music they liked. One of the members of the *Raad*, who lived in Bandung noted

that in that city Eurasians, who were registered as Western, often tuned into *Krontjong* broadcasts. Likewise, it was noted that Eastern youth liked to listen to jazz music on the ‘Western programme’.⁷⁵ At one point NIROM even transferred the indigenous listeners on the islands Ambon and Menado from the ‘Eastern’ to ‘Western’ category in its administration at the advice of ‘experts’ who noted that they did not listen to ‘specifically Eastern music, such as *gamelan* for example’, but preferred *Krontjong* and jazz. Despite protests from several members, the president of the *Raad* agreed with this administrative measure.⁷⁶

The confusion as how to categorize *Krontjong* reveals a blind spot in the glass house of the *Raad van Advies* of the NIROM. As the members of the *Raad* found it difficult to label the music-style, they allowed it to be broadcast freely, with the argument that it was popular. As a result, NIROM was a vital catalyst in the development of this music-style in the late 1930s, as has been noted by various authors.⁷⁷ In those same years, the anti-colonial nationalist movement embraced *Krontjong* music as a marker for Indonesian identity and strove to create their own space to make radio. After pressure from Indonesian nationalists in the *Volksraad*, the colonial government gave into their demands for a ‘native’ broadcasting organization, independent from NIROM. The Dutch company was forced to hand over the frequencies of the Eastern broadcasting programme and part of the license fees in 1940 to the Indonesian radio-society PPKR.⁷⁸ In this way, the fetish on the categories ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ to control the NIROM broadcasts ironically contributed to the undermining of the societal order it aimed to protect. In this sense, the political meaning of radio broadcasting in the colonial state had changed within the space of two decades. Whereas in the early 1920s wireless technology had been hailed by the proponents of the *Rijkseenheid-gedachte* as a unique tool to strengthen colonial unity in the Indonesian archipelago, by the end of the 1930s the medium had also been adopted by those who had a vision of a world without empires.

CONCLUSION

The early history of radio broadcasting in the Netherlands Indies reveals much about the complex relation between visions of empire and practices in the colony. On the one hand, visions of imperial unity and colonial hierarchical order forwarded by the proponents of the *Rijkseenheid-gedachte* were a vital catalyst behind the development

of wireless technology in the Dutch empire. The large financial injections of investors connected to the ‘colonial lobby’ and the official funds provided by the *Indische PTT* enabled the development of the expensive equipment that enabled broadcasting in the whole of the archipelago. The initial hope of these actors was that radio could help to bolster the ‘Dutch element’ in the Indies and therefore prioritized ‘neutrality’ of the broadcasts in order to preserve the existing colonial social order. However, political and legal constraints delayed the organizational development of the radio broadcasting company NIROM. In this vacuum, radio-amateurs, both Western and non-Western, started to organize themselves in the ether. By the time NIROM was operational the radio practices had taken a completely other form than was originally envisioned by the ‘colonial lobby’. From the start the day-to-day management of NIROM, which by law was required to take into account the listeners’ wishes, was greatly influenced by this situation, which led to the development of two programmes for ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ listeners, which on paper were separate, but in practice interacted.

The debates in the Advisory Council of NIROM reflect the complex nature and inherent tensions of these broadcasting practices. On the one hand the Council, which was formally an elected body, tried to best serve the wishes of the listeners. On the other hand, all members were members of established radio organizations and this institutional bias created a sense of responsibility to uphold the social order as decreed by the colonial authorities. In their detailed discussions about the various elements of the NIROM broadcasts this latter consideration was dominant, and although the Council did not wish to install a system of preventive censorship, control of the ether was the main goal of the Council. In this sense, the Council operated as part of the colonial state apparatus that actively tried to monitor public opinion to counter Indonesian nationalism—a surveillance-strategy so eloquently captured in the metaphor of the glass house. However, just like Pramudya Anata Toer’s novel series, this history ended with an ironic twist in the late 1930s which shows the limits of the reach of the colonial state, which created its own blind spots. The visions on colonial broadcasting of the 1920s prompted the Council-members to focus on separating the ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ programmes, but at the same time it obscured their view on what was actually happening on-air. Therefore, the popular music-style *Krontjong*,

which did not neatly fit these categories, was allowed by the colonial authorities to become a dominant feature of the ‘Eastern’ broadcasts, whilst at the same time becoming a powerful symbol for the Indonesian nationalist movement.

NOTES

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16. Taselaar, *De koloniale lobby*.
17. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 107.
18. Taselaar, *De koloniale lobby*, xvii.
19. Kuitenhoud, ‘Radio as a Tool of Empire,’ 83–103.
20. Kuitenhoud, ‘Radio as a Tool of Empire,’ 90.
21. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 73.
22. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 139.
23. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 81–85.
24. ‘hij moet erop gericht zijn te voldoen aan de behoeften en wenschen van het luisterend publiek’; ‘De omroepstof mag niet in strijd zijn met de belangen van den staat, de wetten des Lands, de openbare orde of de goede zeden’. Article 5 of the NIROM concession, as published in: Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 192.
25. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 98.
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27. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 100.
28. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 141; Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land*, 182.
29. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 124.
30. Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land*, 183.
31. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 12 April 1934, pp. 3–4.
32. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 1 May 1936, p. 4.
33. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 21 August 1937, p. 11.
34. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 7 March 1935.
35. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 12 April 1934, pp. 9–10. In 1936 it even was decided to have a press release about every meeting. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 1 May 1936, p. 24.
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38. For this term see UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 6 March 1936, p. 13; UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 2 July 1934, pp. 12–15; UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 28 May 1936, pp. 15–16.
39. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, p. 102.
40. In the 1936 election 9204 listeners returned a ballot, of which 520 were not valid. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 6 February 1936. Witte’s graph suggests that at the time there were between 11469 (January) and 24131 (December) registered radio-owners. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 124.
41. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 98.
42. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 1 April 1937, p. 3. This prediction proved to be quite accurate and in fact this percentage was reached in 1941 when out of 101,868 license-owners, 51,824 were registered as ‘Eastern’. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, p. 124.
43. Witte has pointed out that this drive was partly inspired by commercial interests of the Philips company, which by that time launched a production line of relatively cheap radio-sets meant for Indonesians. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 107.
44. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 143; Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land*, 183.
45. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 12 April 1934, p. 12.
46. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 2 July 1934, p. 2; UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 24 August 1935, p. 12.
47. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 9 January 1936, p. 3.
48. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 20 August 1936, p. 20.
49. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 118–119. It seems as if Witte only looked at the Dutch language guide for this sample (August–September 1937). Looking at the Malay language guide Takonai Susumu has found a similar percentage. T. Susumu, ‘Soeara NIROM and Musical Culture in Colonial Indonesia,’ *Japanese Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2006): 145–203, 145.
50. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 25 June 1936, pp. 7–8.
51. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 8 August 1934, p. 8.
52. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 19 December 1935, p. 2.
53. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 4 March 1937, p. 4; UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 1 June 1935, p. 6.
54. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 20 August 1936, p. 13; UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 29 April 1937, p. 8.
55. At the same time, however, preventive censorship was becoming the norm for radio broadcasting in the Netherlands. See H. Wijfjes, *Radio onder restrictie. Overheidsbemoeienis met radioprogramma's 1919–1931* (Amsterdam: IISG, 1988), 271. Also, the written media in the

Indies were increasingly muzzled by censorship laws in the 1930s. See M. Maters, *Van zachte wenk tot harde hand: Persvrijheid en persbreidel in Nederlands-Indië 1906–1942* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998), 30.

56. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 17 December 1934, pp. 10–13.
57. ‘de kraan dicht te draaien zoo gauw de omroepstof de perken van het geoorkloofde overschrijdt’. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 17 January 1935, p. 5.
58. ‘Mohammedaansch-Godsdienstige lezingen [...] in zeer universeelen trant’. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 10 December 1936, p. 11.
59. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 1 May 1936, p. 25.
60. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 12 November 1936, pp. 18–25; UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 10 December 1936, pp. 6–17.
61. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 30 December 1936, pp. 1–10.
62. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 11 November 1937, pp. 9–10.
63. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 10 December 1936, p. 2.
64. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 12 April 1934, p. 20 and appendix. This decision was upheld in a meeting in 1936. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 6 February 1936, p. 17.
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66. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 1 April 1937, p. 7; UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 27 May 1937, p. 5.
67. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 9 December 1937, p. 6.
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70. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 11 November 1937, p. 12.
71. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 22 July 1937, p. 14.
72. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 22 July 1937, p. 14.
73. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 1 April 1937, p. 1.
74. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 27 June 1935, p. 6.
75. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 27 June 1935, p. 5.
76. UBL, ‘Ontwerp verslag’. Meeting 17 October 1935, pp. 4–5.
77. Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land*, 180–181; P. Yampolsky, ‘Music on Dutch East Indies Radio in 1938,’ in *Sonic Modernities in the Malay World: A History of Popular Music, Social Distinction and Lifestyle*, ed. B. Barendregt (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 47–112.
78. Witte, *De Indische radio-omroep*, 146–148.



CHAPTER 10

Epilogue. Colonial Distances: Dutch Intellectual Images of Global Trade and Conquest in the Colonial and Postcolonial Age

Remco Raben

Dutch visions of empire—now and through the eyes of contemporaries—are tantalizingly paradoxical. On the one hand, there is a perception of a reluctant, commerce-based, culturally respectful form of Dutch colonialism, on the other hand is the grim image of ruthless and permanent violence, coercive labour and racism. Both flavours have always lived side by side. The question is: under what circumstances could such disparate perceptions develop? Evidently other European empires have generated similar kinds of skewed imaginaries—actually they are an essential feature of Western imperialism over the last centuries. But several ingredients of Dutch imperialism and politics left their mark on the intellectual home colonial cultures in The Netherlands or Dutch Republic.

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Empire was the biggest public secret of the Netherlands, and it continues to be so. The fact that most if not all surveys of Dutch history largely ignore the imperial roots of Dutch politics and culture, demonstrates how uneasily colonialism fits into the Dutch national autobiography.¹ Empire—the use of the term was always carefully avoided in Dutch parlance—was something that happened ‘over there’; it was administered from the Netherlands in a business-like and efficient manner. In many ways, colonial cultures in the Netherlands were dramatically unspectacular. This helped to conceal the praxis of empire from home. What almost without exception appeared to the Dutch onlooker as, first, a world of trade and reluctant conquest and, much later, a specimen of rational developmentalism, in reality operated as belligerent and violent regimes.²

Dutch imperialism may have been unobtrusive or shrouded, but its practices were never ‘normal’. Slave trade, forced labour and coercive exchange were acquired tastes and needed justification. This was provided by stakeholders, lawyers, policymakers, intellectuals and artists. Imperial powers couch their often brutal and deeply violent expansionism in legal and culturalist arguments, which served to legitimate imperial conquest and occupation. Images of empire became part of an intricate network of information coming from the colonized areas to Europe. In the process, information was selected, filtered, muted and often euphemized for home consumption. The Netherlands were no exception to the imperial rule.

The task at hand is to explain the forms of information about and visions of the colonies took in the hands of intellectuals and the discursive genealogies that emerged. Instead of focussing on the assumed ‘exceptionalism’ of the Dutch empire, this chapter will account for the contradictions and silences in the Dutch stories of empire. It will do so by looking at the complicated relationship between intellectual home imperialism and the imperial praxis abroad. In so doing, not only the lingering tropes of the Dutch imperial imagination will be traced, but also the permanence of the moral tensions and double standards that imperialism created.

OCEANIC REPUBLICANISM

Empire was not on the Dutch mind. Consisting of an assemblage of small provinces at the fringe of the large European empires, the Dutch Republic was bent on survival and strengthening its commercial wealth. This not only produced a type of colonial expansion that was markedly mercantile in its justification and rationale, but also created an

intellectual discourse that foregrounded the boons of trade and almost painstakingly avoided references to the coercive sides of the Dutch trade empire.

Early Dutch visions of its global expansion were strongly influenced by the war against Spain and Portugal and by perceptions of freedom and republicanism that pervaded the political discourses of the fledgling state. As Arthur Weststeijn rightly argues, Dutch political ideals had a pronounced influence on the justification of empire, especially in the earliest phase.³ The joint discourses of commercialism and republicanism legitimized, but also normalized empire, not as a form of oppression of foreign peoples, but as a mercantile necessity. Moreover, early colonial theoreticians eschewed obligations that would weaken the young country.

The tensions between theory and practice, and between blueprinting and ex post legitimization were present from the earliest attempts in making sense of empire. Within a few years after the establishment of the merger United East India Company (VOC) in 1602, the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius provided the legal and philosophical backbone to the Dutch ventures in global waters in his treatise *Mare Liberum*. It was published in 1609, but in fact was part of a much larger work, *De iure praedae*, composed around 1605, which never saw publication in his lifetime.⁴ The literature on Grotius is vast, discussions revolving around his concepts of the freedom of maritime navigation and trade, and on the right of privateering on the basis of a concept of natural law. In recent years, scholars have emphasized the political agendas of Grotius' theorizing, and his deep involvement with the fledgling Dutch Republic and its negotiations with the king of Spain, Portugal and England. He strongly supported the use of the VOC as an instrument for fighting the Iberian states, but denied that the VOC itself was systematically breaking the rules of free trade he had formulated, by smothering competition at home, attacking competitors overseas, and forcing local people to deliver their goods.⁵ Grotius' meditations, however, were not only directed towards international competitors, but also to those shareholders of the Company who feared that the costs of warfare would imperil their chances on high returns on their investments.⁶

Grotius was an important voice and he was instrumental in backing up the Dutch merchants' attacks on, in particular, their Portuguese foes, but how much did he matter to shaping the modes of empire? Grotius himself acknowledged that he started his work on *De iure praedae* in support of existing practices of Dutch merchant-soldiers in Asia: 'I gave

my attention to stirring up the minds of our fellow-countrymen to guard bravely what had been felicitously begun'.⁷ Later he admitted that he had supported the East India Company to exclude competitors from the trade.⁸ Now Grotius' elaborations were not just a cynical extenuation of colonial practice. They point at a development in Dutch and European culture to search for legal foundations of their global reach and their international relations—an intellectual effort that continued at least until the international embrace of decolonization in December 1960 under United Nations auspices, and may even be traced further into the recurrent discussions about and refashioning of, for instance, the Dutch political arrangement with the last remnants of the overseas part of the Dutch kingdom.

Apart from his juridical ruminations, the case of Grotius illustrates how political and legal visions related to the practice of empire. They often served to prop up the colonial exploits, but hardly ever offered a blueprint of empire. Only up to a point did discourses of republicanism or legal treatises matter to colonial practices proper. Trade without dominance proved to be undesirable to most ambitious men in the field. The primacy and extension of coercive and exclusionary practices by both VOC and, after 1621, the West India Company (WIC)—both initiated and supported by the States-General—demonstrated how much the Dutch ambitions drew on tactics of violence, conquest and monopolization. This indeed becomes crystal clear from the instructions the commanders of the early VOC fleets to Asia carried, and by the writing of the admiral Cornelis Matelieff, who commanded the fleet to Southeast Asia between 1605 and 1608, and wrote extensive and influential reports to the VOC directors. In those, Matelieff promoted the use of military means and the establishment of strongholds in Asia.⁹

That commercial profit was the predominant perspective of the investors in the Republic is hardly surprising. The emphasis on trade was intellectually rooted in an anti-imperial republican mindset, that explicitly announced to dissociate Dutch trade-based Republican global expansion from the Roman (and Spanish) imperial model, which was prone to a cycle of rise and decline.¹⁰ But perhaps this argument was not even needed: the primacy of commerce in the discourse of empire squarely echoed the initial motivations of colonial trade. As late as 1701, Pieter van Dam, lawyer of the Dutch East India Company, wrote in his monumental survey of the Company's global business, that if Philip II, king of Spain, had continued to tolerate the shipping of Dutchmen to Spain and

Portugal, they would never have ventured to expand its trade as far as the East Indies.¹¹ As Catia Antunes shows, the origin myth of the Dutch East and West Indian trading companies was both right—as it acknowledged the predominance of business interests in the first expeditions to Asia—and terribly skewed, because it glossed over the political motivations and the intrinsic violence of all Dutch ventures in extra-European waters and coasts.¹² The intellectual climate of Dutch expansionism was contradictory from the outset.

Legal elaboration was only one way of dealing with empire intellectually. Most literary authors embraced the commercial myths of Dutch expansion, associating colonialism primarily with shipping and trade cornucopia. Steeped as they were in ancient poetry and philosophy, they harked back to the ancient canon for hyperboles and explored the parallels with seafaring heroes of antiquity, such as the Argonauts and Odysseus. Seldom poets reached over the seas to the lands of conquest. Holland's most famous poet and playwright of this period, Joost van den Vondel, was often inspired by the Dutch maritime ventures, but only fleetingly refers to war and conquest abroad. Van den Vondel's 1623 poem *Het lof der zee-vaert*, which was an ode to Vondel's friend Laurens Reael, the third governor-general of the Company in Asia, was a celebration of the free oceans that Grotius had propagated: 'Visit freely the distant regions,/but pay heed to honesty in commerce, and in words,/nor stain by violence the Christian faith,/or fatten yourselves on robbery'.¹³ The poem held some oblique criticism against Jan Pieterszoon Coen's violent conduct in Asia and was an example of the myth of free trade the Dutch had created.¹⁴

The attraction of the oceanic idiom endured, even though sometimes the celebration of imperial conquest was mixed in, as happened in Van den Vondel's long poem celebrating the Amsterdam militia in 1668, which contained references to the struggles with the British and possibly even the conquest of Makassar in 1667.¹⁵ By and large the odes to oceanic sailing remained a strong literary trope, also in the visual arts.¹⁶ If the literary output of the Republic is something to go by, it indicates how much the idea of commerce remained at the centre of the imperial imagination, even after the companies in east, west and south had acquired extensive territorial footholds. It not only corresponded with the initial motivation and enduring legitimization of the Dutch engagement in trade and conquest, but actually represented the way empire appeared to most people in the Republic: as departing and returning fleets bound for the commodities from the other continents. Generally

speaking, the poets in the Republic hardly looked at imperialism as it materialized in the colonial territories. An exception may have been the city of Batavia, which was regularly the object of praise, mostly by rhyming Company servants.¹⁷

Despite the strength of the oceanic imagination, mentalities slowly shifted under influence of imperial realities.¹⁸ The case of Dutch Brazil is interesting, as it demonstrates how the conquest and occupation of extensive colonies produced discourses that were markedly more ‘imperial’ than most literary idioms. The struggle over Brazil and its eventual conquest on the Portuguese in 1624 and again in 1630 received much attention and exultation among the Dutch public.¹⁹ It shows how much the imperial conquest could stir up the emotions and feed Dutch patriotism.

The intellectual and artistic manifestations of empire were wrought with ambiguities. Sovereign or even monarchical pretensions overseas interfered with republican inspirations at home. In the same vein did images within the Republic of a predominantly maritime trade conflict with colonial practices of conquest and coercion. And whereas the search for wealth and trade was presented as a ‘national’ affair, representations of colonial conquest and trade increasingly operated in a (Western) European framework of knowledge and wonder. This process speeded up in the eighteenth century. Paradoxically, ‘empire’ was increasingly framed both as a demonstration of European prowess and superiority, and as a constituent part of a Dutch nation. Benjamin Schmidt pointed at the markedly international legitimization of Dutch, and European, conquest.²⁰

The eighteenth century was also witness to the intensification of anti-slavery sentiments. Although throughout the company era intellectuals, in particular Protestant ministers, had expressed their misgivings about the institution of slavery, they had always remained few. Protests found new inspirations in the Enlightenment, and were expressed in new forms, such as the theatre and the (epistolary) novel. Several plays that were critical of slavery were written or translated in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.²¹ This was a transnational debate par excellence.²² It was also the first instance of European authors, some of them with colonial experience, addressing the regimes in the colonies. However, they did not foreground the enslaved or manumitted people—the white male continued to occupy the moral centre.²³ Nor did it result in immediate abolition—which was notoriously late in the Netherlands (1863 in the Caribbean colonies). Realities in the colonies proved stronger than words in the metropole.

THE NATIONALIZATION OF PROFIT

Dutch colonialism never shed its mercantile overtones and justification, but after the demise, first of the WIC in 1792, and later the United East India Company in 1796/1799, the Dutch empire acquired two important new elements: Christianization—which was strangely muted in the early-modern period, and Enlightenment values. Adding to this was a nationalization of the colonial ventures.

With the termination of the trading companies, the colonial architecture had to be set on a new footing. The Company possessions became the subject of the strong unitary and statist forces that emerged with the Patriot takeover of the Republic in 1795. René Koekkoek demonstrates how much imperial discourses transformed under the impact of the late-eighteenth-century Atlantic revolutions.²⁴ After the dissolution of the trading companies, the state took centre stage. The colonies were announced to be an inseparable part of the motherland. Continuities were however stronger than Patriots claimed in the late 1790s. The report produced by Jacob Hendrik Floh in 1797, for instance, served primarily to show that the state was entitled to take possession of the colonies of the former VOC. Strictly speaking this was a novelty, but the involvement of the Stadholder and the States-General in the affairs of the VOC and the defence of the colonies had always been there, and had grown in the late-eighteenth century. Interestingly, although the company colonies were proclaimed part and parcel of the Dutch, they were not integrated into the same moral and constitutional sphere, nor did it, tellingly, encourage Dutch to speak about ‘empire’. The division of the Dutch imperial space was maintained.

Again, we should remain aware of the large gap between the intellectual underpinnings of empire by politicians and writers in the Netherlands, and the actual mechanisms of empire. Jur van Goor, for instance, has argued that the mentalities and mechanisms of colonial rule did not really alter until the imposition of the Cultivation System.²⁵ Pre-existing ‘repertoires’ of monopolization and forced deliveries, for instance, provided a promising example of state exploitation.²⁶

Still, in several respects the nationalization of the colonies affected notions about the colonies. The takeover drove home the idea that the colonies strutted the wealth and glory not only of Company investors, but the entire Dutch nation. This nationalization of profit was to be the guiding principle for the period of the Cultivation System in

Java, parts of which survived until well into the twentieth century. The nationalization also stimulated the efforts to link scientific knowledge to a political economy geared to bring colonial wealth in the hands of the state. As Alicia Schrikker aptly remarks, this was often worded in terms of progress, and solutions were sought in bureaucratic institutions and project plans.²⁷ Although the royal house never demonstrated immense enthusiasm for colonial affairs, the new King William I did show interest in the colonial enterprise by ordering collectors to bring artefacts from colonies and trade destinations to the Netherlands.²⁸ His aim was explicitly to make the colony profitable to the Dutch nation.

One of the main architects of the nineteenth-century national exploitative colonialism was Jean-Chrétien Baud, who served Dutch the Dutch colonial state from 1811 to 1848, both in Java and in the Netherlands. He first served as general secretary in Batavia, from 1824 to 1832 in the Netherlands as director for the colonies, and later as governor-general (1833–1836) and minister for the colonies (1840–1848). J.C. Baud epitomized the new state-led colonial exploitation and the new Enlightenment and Christian inspirations. He was closely involved in the development of the Cultivation System by Governor-General Johannes van den Bosch. In order to build a professional and loyal corps of officials he set up a training school for colonial civil servants in the Netherlands. He also initiated the translation of the Bible in Javanese, which would boost the study of the Javanese language and culture—a clear sign of the deeper thrust of Dutch colonialism into local societies. On the other hand, Baud epitomized the distancing of Western and indigenous inhabitants of the colonies. He also exemplifies the racialization of cultural discourses. Thus, he remarked in a report in 1850: ‘History teaches that the contact of the white race with dark-skinned people always resulted in the submission of the latter by the first. Among the black races this experience has engendered the conviction that the white belongs to a higher order of creatures’. From this, Baud deducted that the ‘pure’ white race had acquired a right of domination.²⁹

We can see the two inspirations of Christianity and Enlightenment even more clearly at work with one of the major voices in the Netherlands on the colonies. W.R. van Hoëvell had travelled to Batavia in 1836 to serve as a Protestant minister in both the Dutch- and Malay-language church. He became a central figure in the scientific and literary life of Batavia, not only as a tireless member of the Batavian Society for

Arts and Sciences, but also as founder and editor of the first major journal in Java, the *Tijdschrift van Nederlandsch Indië* (1838).³⁰

Van Hoëvell was an exponent of various crucial changes that occurred in Dutch colonial cultures in the mid-nineteenth century: the rise of organized humanitarianism, the advent of liberalist ideas in colonial politics and economy, the role of print media, and the politicization of colonial debates.³¹ W.R. van Hoëvell can be seen as a harbinger of a new ethical liberalism in the Dutch empire. After his forced return to the Netherlands in 1848—he had given support to a protest movement of disgruntled European citizens in this year of revolution—he became one of the most vocal advocates in Dutch parliament on colonial matters. Both as a prominent member of parliament and as a publicist Van Hoëvell fought for the abolition of slavery and more righteous management in the colonies. In 1854, he published an account of the lives of the enslaved people in Suriname. His aim was, as he stated in his introduction, to present ‘only the truth and nothing but the truth’. He emphasized how the Netherlands was a rich, free and Christian country, enjoying trade and entertainment. ‘Each house is a palace—but the treasures that made it possible to erect these palaces, are for a part the pressed lifeblood, the sweat and blood of slaves who are bowed down by oppressive whippings’.³²

Van Hoëvell was instrumental in what historian Paul van der Velde has called the ‘integration’ of the Indies.³³ Until the mid-nineteenth century, the colonies had been far removed from the awareness of the Dutch people. The number of people going to the colonies was extremely small, until the mid-nineteenth-century a few hundred civilians per year at the most.³⁴ The emergence of parliamentary politics since 1848, and the increasing number of newspapers and journals, as well as increasing migration to the Indies, brought colonial affairs into wider circulation.

Van Hoëvell was the intellectual parent of Multatuli (Eduard Douwes Dekker), who in his famous novel *Max Havelaar* (1860) pilloried the mechanisms of repression by Javanese officials and the Dutch apathy towards the abuses. *Max Havelaar* was bestowed the rare privilege to become a topic of debate in the Dutch parliament.³⁵ The occasion was the King’s Speech in September 1860, which contained only minimal and triumphalist references to the colonies. In the ensuing parliamentary debate, Van Hoëvell remarked: ‘Recently a shiver ran through the country, caused by a book’. His words were picked up in the press

and the issue of colonial governance and the responsibilities towards the colonized became a hotly debated topic.

Van Hoëvell and Multatuli were highly instrumental in mobilizing the ethical forces in the Netherlands. With the development of the press and the emergence of an increasing number of clubs and societies, the circulation of knowledge between the colonies and the intellectual circles in Europe intensified. One of the new societies was the *Indisch Genootschap*, which was founded in 1854—and again Van Hoëvell had a part in its establishment. It became one of the most important meeting places of old colonial hands and men of learning to discuss colonial matters.³⁶ According to the minutes of the society's meetings, civilizing policies were at the centre of its heated debates. Never was the legitimacy of colonialism or conquest proper a point of discussion, and all members espoused the concept of Western leadership in advancing the indigenous peoples. The *Indisch Genootschap* shows how much 'Ethical' topics started to be widely debated in the decades before 1900.

Intellectual and social developments in the Netherlands reverberated in the discussions about empire. Christian inspirations left a clear mark on the welfare policies that were formulated after 1900. These sentiments were paired to ideas about development that reflected the potential of technology and business that emerged in the Netherlands in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They formed the backdrop of a relentless expansion of Dutch colonial territories, at least in the Indonesian archipelago, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian lives. The darker twin of development was pacification.³⁷ The discussions in the Dutch press and clubs formed both a forceful stimulus and justification of the military and economic penetration of the Dutch colonies.

MODERNIZING COLONIALISM

The 'Ethical' moment of 1901—the year the Dutch Queen announced the 'moral mission' of the Dutch government towards the colonial population—was only a formal marking in a longer process of increasing awareness of the moral duties of colonial government. Discourses of modernization, progress and civilization entered Dutch colonial parlance since the late-nineteenth century. In actual policies, they became manifest in a heightened building activity, increasing attention to education, and ruthless annexation.

Interestingly, the ‘modernization’ of the colony also created new insecurities for the European powers, particularly after World War I. In 1927, the ‘Ethical’ Dutch minister of the colonies J.C. Koningsberger ordered a survey of the Dutch colonial administrative system.³⁸ It was written by A.D.A. de Kat Angelino, Dutch official of Chinese Affairs in the Netherlands Indies.³⁹ The publication of the two volumes, published in 1929 and 1930, at this juncture in world history, was highly opportune and symbolic. Cultural pessimism in the West, a global economic depression, and an increasingly vocal nationalist movement in the Netherlands Indies made a new motivation of colonial rule necessary.

De Kat Angelino’s work did not offer a blueprint for governing the Indies, but was a piece of encouragement for a continued colonialism under threat of nationalist voices and by cultural pessimism in Europe. In a belated response to Oswald Spengler’s *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918), De Kat Angelino tried to formulate a positive image of Western civilization. Western man was not primarily motivated by material gain or efficiency, as cultural critics like Spengler assumed, but ‘by feelings of love, friendship, reverence, piety, loyalty and patriotism’.⁴⁰ De Kat Angelino created a vision of Christianity as the ultimate source of universal norms. In their love of their fellow men, Christians were able to guide other peoples who still lived in magical spheres. It was this Christian Europe that would provide guidance to the underdeveloped world. De Kat Angelino presented a vision of a static, community-minded, introvert East, while Western culture was dynamic, individualistic and urban. The West was waking up the East. And until the education of the East was accomplished, the West had to continue to provide guidance.

In many ways, De Kat Angelino’s work represents a modernized version of the Ethical policy and the Christian values that had entered Dutch colonial thinking in the nineteenth century. He stressed the importance of education and welfare policies above political reform. But things had changed since the inception of the Ethical policy. By the time of writing, the development of the Indies’ society was not a laudable idea but a reality. De Kat Angelino’s work gave a new leash to European colonial rule and epitomizes the ongoing change of the visions of empire from a strongly race-based legitimization of economic exploitation to a discourse of European mentorship towards modernity. It employed, moreover, a very ‘European’ mental framework. De Kat Angelino confirmed Dutch, or better European, stewardship in the colonized world. His outlook on the colonial relationship also

had less esoteric spokesmen. The influential Dutch Indies' conservative newspaper editor H.C. Zentgraaff wrote in 1930: 'The West has an ethical mandate over the East, and therefore our right to govern the Indies is rooted in the spirit of civilization and morality'.⁴¹ It could be as straightforward as that.

There were other voices too, critical ones, but many were silenced by the colonial police or drowned out in the general celebration of colonial rule. Since the turn of the century, a pattern emerged that would dominate the entire twentieth century and beyond. Critics started to challenge not merely the mode of colonial rule, but the very essence of it. Anticolonialism came in two strands: from intellectuals and activists in the colonies, and from leftist circles in Europe.

Anticolonialism in the Netherlands came without exception from Marxist or Socialist writers. One visionary voice was the historian Jan Romein, who in 1931 wrote an essay on 'Asia's awakening' for the Dutch edition of *Harmsworth's universal history of the world*.⁴² The essay, in a separate publication, was shipped to the Indies, where it was promptly censored. It nevertheless circulated in illegal copies and found avid readers among nationalist intellectuals. Its message was that Asia had been temporarily offset by the sudden European ascendancy but was on the brink of making a comeback.

Intellectuals from the colonies became increasingly vocal, but they were quarantined as much as possible. The repression of both anticolonial intellectuals and popular critical voices was successful. The political police in the Netherlands Indies was able to intimidate nationalist intellectual life through raids and censorship, without entirely undermining the façade of civil rule. The fallout of this repression was a general belief among Dutchmen in a *Pax Neerlandica*—a term that started to circulate after World War I but became only popular in the 1930s and of course was a euphemism of sorts.

The strange situation evolved that anticolonial messages could be voiced much more loudly and explicitly in the Netherlands than in the colonies—as the case of Jan Romein's treatise demonstrated.⁴³ In the same vein, Indonesian students in Europe were able to develop and vent strong anticolonial ideologies, even as exiles from the colony. The Indonesian student association Perhimpunan Indonesia, for instance, emerged in 1923 as an important breeding ground of Indonesian nationalism.⁴⁴ Mohammad Hatta, Perhimpunan's chairman from 1926 to 1930, explained in one of his articles in the association's journal

Indonesia Merdeka (Free Indonesia) how the world was kept ignorant of what happened in Indonesia, because of the foreign oppressors, who controlled the information.⁴⁵ With this loud and clear message, Hatta not only denounced the economic exploitation of his country, but also pointed at the rules of colonial distance, that kept the truth from coming out. The voice of the Perhimpoenan Indonesia remained marginal in The Netherlands, and was repressed in the colony, but sometimes the Dutch had to pay attention. In 1928, Hatta was called to the court in The Hague on charges of sedition. In his address he fulminated against the increasing repression of the Indonesian people, the policy of pauperization, its censorship, terrorization, racial justice and the exploitation of Indonesian labour. He concluded: 'We thought, that here in the land of Grotius, where people are boastful of the fundamental right of free citizens, we would enjoy the same elementary rights. But no!'⁴⁶

Hatta was one of the growing number of anticolonial and nationalist writers, if not one of the most clear and outspoken. From Suriname, few voices were heard that explicitly denounced colonialism and called for independence. The best known and most piercing call came from Anton de Kom, who in 1934 wrote his scathing record of colonial rule in Suriname, *Wij slaven van Suriname*. It reads like a Surinamese version of Hatta's address, minus the wish for independence and plus a more outspoken Marxist tenor. 'We only want to demonstrate one thing: coloured fellow-countrymen, you were slaves, you will continue to live in poverty and misery, as long as you do not have confidence in your own proletarian unity'.⁴⁷

Hatta and De Kom were intellectuals who turned colonial discourses on their head. But they could be intimidated and exiled and the message would be muffled. To the majority of the Dutch, and other Europeans, colonialism was something that happened elsewhere, in another moral universe. This awareness of distance had always existed and would endure through decolonization. The absence or marginality of Surinamese and Indonesian national independence movements, the successes of political repression and the emphasis on 'peaceful' development kept most of the Dutch, in the Netherlands and in the colonies, completely unaware of the Indonesian, Surinamese or Antillean frustrations or aspirations. As the famous Dutch author Hella Haasse, who grew up in the Dutch colonial capital Batavia, later acknowledged, she hardly had an eye for Indonesians, 'whom in my youth I accepted as décor, as a natural part of the surroundings, but whom I did not really consciously

see'.⁴⁸ Only few Dutch were conscious of the shaky morality of their superior presence in the colonies. One of them, Eddy du Perron, who had both Asian and European forbears and was born in Java, left the colony in 1939 for good. As he wrote to the Indonesian nationalist Soetan Sjahrir: 'In order to stand convincingly "on the right side", one has to be an *Indonesian*. If I were an Indonesian, I would be [...] nationalist down to the tips of my fingers. [...] Here I allow myself only the right to act very politely and friendly towards the Indonesians, – and for the clarity of the situation to leave. [...] You see: people like me should clear out'.⁴⁹

DUTCH POST-EMPIRE

Decolonization—real and discursive—reduced and transformed the empire, but did not immediately change Dutch mindsets. In many ways decolonization was a solution to an imperial organizational problem, not the result of radically new insights in civilizational relations, and not even in the right of colonial occupation. The shock of colonial vulnerability against the Japanese attack forced Dutchmen to take more seriously the messages of self-determination. In the Netherlands and in exile, thoughts dwelled on the future of the empire ever since Queen Wilhelmina, in London, had mused in a radio broadcast on 7 December 1942 for the Dutch radio station Radio Oranje on a post-war world in which the colonies and the Netherlands would become part of a Commonwealth on an equal footing.⁵⁰

The theory was there, and the 'colonized peoples' certainly caught the sign of the times. In Dutch circles, however, time was going more slowly. As Jennifer Foray showed, Dutch elites in wartime Netherlands continued to think along lines of the Queen's radio broadcast, in directions of increasing autonomy and self-determination, but always gradual and within a continuing network of Dutch-Indonesian-Caribbean association.⁵¹ This seemed to work fine for the Caribbean colonies, where nationalist identities were weakly mobilized, but in Indonesia the idea of a controlled and cautious decolonization was out of reality.⁵²

Very few Dutch intellectuals really had an idea about the landslide that had occurred among Indonesian elites. One academic, professor G. Weijer wrote in a report on the economic situation of Indonesia, in early 1948: 'Our honour as a civilized nation does not allow us to leave behind in unrepairable chaos the countries that we have run so magnificently'.⁵³ This summed up what probably most Dutch officials at that

time were thinking. Theirs was an unshakeable belief in the responsibility of development. This also becomes clear from the writings and oral testimonies of (former) civil servants in Indonesia in the late 1940s.⁵⁴ All stress their responsibility towards the population and sense of duty against the forces of disintegration. An ethical pacification reflex pervaded the military and civil ranks: a return to normalcy was a condition for decolonization. It epitomizes the unshaken colonial hierarchy of the Dutch minds. Very, very few could distance themselves from this deeply ingrained world view. Despite the reports of Dutch military violence in the war and the pressure from the international world, most Dutch were supporting the government's policy to create 'positive' conditions for negotiations with the self-proclaimed Indonesian Republic, even if this led to atrocities and mass violence.

The Indonesian-Dutch war of 1945–1949 provides the ultimate illustration of how Dutch imperial information filters worked. Protests against the military campaigns in the Netherlands were few. They came primarily from the left wing of politics and press. Among leftist intellectuals, a minority however, Dutch war atrocities were generally abhorred. Especially in early 1949, when the violence in Java escalated completely and tens of thousands of Indonesians fell victim to Dutch barbarity, a number of eyewitness accounts by Dutch soldiers reached the print media in the Netherlands. Their accounts did not fail to stir the press and upset politicians, but more out of concern to keep control of the political process than out of humanitarian motivation.

Withdrawal from Indonesia was a shock and the process was painful, but once over the hurt was soon gone. The existence of a wider 'trauma' of decolonization is in no way apparent, except perhaps in Dutch irrational obstinacy to hold on to Dutch New Guinea.⁵⁵ The colonial withdrawal rather had another, more subtle, effect, in the emergence of the blossoming of an industry of nostalgia for empire, which kept the colonial hierarchies intact. We see this clearly in the Dutch postcolonial literature from the 1950s onwards. Although progressive voices did exist, most novelists were basically memoirists, narrating the thoroughly depoliticized (and therefore highly political) story of a tranquil youth in the Dutch tropics, bereft of any confrontation with political or destitute Indonesians—the dreamy pictures were mainly coming from the Asian colonies. The 'real existing postcolonialism'—the term is Bill Schwarz's—was above all patchy and paradoxical, and for the greater part did not distance itself from colonialism.⁵⁶ Although far from all literature had

a nostalgic tinge, the pervading aroma was melancholic. Authors often explicitly denied any political longing for the empire, but much of their narratives were steeped in colonial perceptions and experiences of the *Pax Neerlandica* and the colonial bourgeois cocoon of order and luxury.

Only a few authors, such as Wim Wertheim and Jan Romein, who had decidedly leftist leanings, openly distanced themselves from the colonial past, and tried to imagine a world free from Western dominance. For Jan Romein, who lectured extensively at Indonesian universities in the early 1950s, Asia was catching up, and the short period of European runaway development was ending.⁵⁷ He found a likeminded spirit in Wim F. Wertheim, a former colonial lawyer, who during his internment under the Japanese, had become convinced of the Indonesian right to independence. After the Japanese surrender, he soon left the country and returned to the Netherlands, where he was appointed a professor of sociology in Amsterdam. There he became active in the *Vereniging Nederland-Indonesië* (Association Netherlands-Indonesia), which brought together leftist activists opposing Dutch military brutality in Indonesia. In his academic work and journalism he consistently emphasized Indonesian perspectives and propagated the idea of a ‘rising Asia’. In a sense, however, Wertheim was also the product of colonial developmentalism, in his advocacy of Western aid to ‘low-developed countries’.⁵⁸ However, it was far removed from De Kat Angelino’s vision of a West that wakes up the East.

Voices pleading for Asia-centric approaches were fairly exceptional in the 1950s. Many left-leaning intellectuals were ready to renounce colonialism, but only few were able or willing to foreground the colonized or newly independent peoples. Romein and Wertheim, although not members of the communist party, could easily be quarantined in the Cold War climate. Remarkably, the international voices against imperialism hardly found any traction in the Netherlands. Frantz Fanon’s work was not discussed in the Dutch press, and a Dutch translation of his *Les damnés de la terre* (1961) only appeared in 1969. Only in the late 1950s, a cautious movement of international solidarity emerged, in particular with respect to the French war in Algeria.⁵⁹ In the popular press, little changed since colonial days. The patronizing tone of most media towards immigrants of colour from the colonies persisted, as did tropes of colonial comfort.

This changed gradually, but never completely, with the advent of, first, Third Worldism, and later, the upsurge of youth protests against global imperialism.⁶⁰ This resulted in a myriad of initiatives, ranging

from solidarity movements with the oppressed in the countries of the Global South, in protests against old and new imperialisms, such as the U.S. in Vietnam or the Portuguese in Angola, and in efforts to stimulate fair trade.⁶¹ Established global hierarchies, however, persisted. Literature from former colonized countries was relegated to Third World series, and therewith encapsulated, despite its good intentions, in a wider vision of global cultural or civilizational order.⁶² Third Worldism reworked colonialism through an ideology of modernization and developmentalism, which was heavily coloured by a moral mix of civilizational superiority and postcolonial guilt. This was typical for the era of decolonization and was far from unique in the Netherlands.

The result was a cohabitation of a fairly generalized anticolonialism and continuing images of colonial hierarchies. In this vision, the developmentalism of the late colonial state could be praised as a benign form of colonialism. Whereas it was generally acknowledged that colonial rule did not conform to conceptions of national self-determination, the intentions of late colonial rule were not basically disputed. In recent years, legacies of colonialism are increasingly challenged but also produce a retrenchment of assumed ‘national’ values, with implicit or explicit references to Dutch benign colonialism or European cultural superiority.⁶³

The voices of intellectuals and influencers with a migrant background have been key to the ongoing changes in the (post)colonial mindset of the Netherlands—and of Europe for that matter. Although we see early stirrings of anticolonial discourses among migrant intellectuals such as the Indo-Europeans Tjalie Robinson and Guus Cleintuar, or Surinamese men such as Otto Huiswoud and Eddy Bruma, their voices were easily drowned out. This only changed fairly recently.⁶⁴ In the 1980s sociologist Philomena Essed addressed the issue of ‘everyday racism’ and thus chastised Dutch complacency and self-images of a tolerant nation.⁶⁵ At the time of publication, Essed’s conceptual widening of the analytical category of racism, and her reproof of persisting Dutch racist (and sexist) attitudes, met much indignation. Thirty years later the word racism still evokes strong reactions among white Dutch. The late emergence of the migrants’ voice has changed the character of the debates on colonialism immensely. Present-day voices are much more squarely confrontational than most of the older anti-racism of the Dutch left. The debate on the legacies and memories of empire have, at all sides, become part of a wider societal debate on culture and citizenship under pressure of migration and shifting power relations in the world.

THE LONG EMPIRE

Over the past four centuries, Dutch intellectual discourses have moved from mercantile oceanic imaginaries to strongly Christian-inspired narratives of the good colony, to a civilizational view of developmentalism, and ultimately to an uneasy postcolonial coexistence of nostalgia and dystopic anticolonialism. These phases cannot be clearly delineated in time. There was what we could call a process of discursive layering at work. Every age absorbed the discursive elements of previous periods. The panegyric of oceanic shipping has never left the Dutch imagination, nor did the Christian foundations of empire. They informed and shaped later imaginings of empire. What lingered was a deeply rooted discourse of rational imperial policies, based on commercial interest and just governance, within a global context of civilizational hierarchies.

The contributions in this volume show that we should be cautious with essentialist characterizations of the Dutch imperial rhetoric. First, there was and is no such thing as a monolithic imperial mindset. Empire acquired different meanings in various strands of culture and life in the metropole, and in a varying relationship to imperial practices.⁶⁶ ‘Intellectual’ transactions with empire could and did take many forms. Novelists adopted and used imperial themes differently than missionary societies or academic curricula, and natural historians employed other tropes of empire than administrators.

A second observation pertains to the national framework in which colonialism is usually interpreted and represented. World visions among intellectuals, politicians and the people were shaped by much more than particularly national experiences. Empires were established in the name of states or nations—even those of the trading companies—but acquired meaning and cultural drive in a European or ‘Western’ context. Dutch authors operated within a discursive field that was cemented by transnational flows of knowledge, people and commodities.⁶⁷ Across much of the colonial period, and after, Dutch expansionism was not only part of a wider European drive to conquest and trade, but was explicitly framed as a European project. The relationship between national and transnational forces worked out differently in various domains. Whereas, for instance, memoirs or novels most often refer to specific situations in Dutch colonies and convey ‘Dutch’ concerns of colonial domesticity, racialized images of colonized peoples were intensively connected to British and especially American tropes of African people around the Atlantic.⁶⁸

A third feature is the persistence of deep-rooted imperial paradoxes. At every stage of Dutch colonialism, practices abroad were incongruent with the theories expounded in the metropole. Moral ambiguities that were developed in the early days of Dutch global conquests persisted and were enriched by new ones. Free trade mutated into coercion and monopolization, commerce into domination, ideas of just rule into blatant exploitation of labour, developmentalism into new inequalities and oppression of civil rights. Imperial praxis created its own dynamics, its own moral circuit, which only partly found its way into the intellectual communications in the Netherlands.

We should also be aware that colonialism never went uncontested. Although this deserves much closer scrutiny, it is evident that from the start protests were voiced against the levels of coercion and brutality involved. Monopolization, slavery, conquest and the high levels of violence were challenged at one time or another. Even in the early days of Dutch expansion, questions were raised against slave trade, high levels of violence and the spirit of conquest and monopolization. Humanitarian discourses gained in force only in the late-eighteenth century, but even so remained a minority. There was, at least until the emergence of emancipatory voices of Marxism and the mobilization of anticolonial discourses from the colonized peoples, no fundamental denial of the right to colonize. However weak or submerged, the protests made clear that colonialism could only be maintained thanks to the double standards of the Dutch, or Western, colonizer. Much of the intellectual effort, therefore, went into a justification of the disparity of colonial and metropolitan moral domains. Helped by the large distances between metropole and colony, the colonial double-entendre could persist up to the present.

A last remark concerns the mechanism of silencing or muting of the voices of the colonized. In colonial times, with the benefit of distance, news and messages from the colonial territories were filtered and recast in manners that made empire suited for home consumption. Voices of protest from the colonies were hardly represented in the media. Not until the early twentieth century did authors from the colonies publish in Dutch and did their writings become available to readers in the Netherlands. Interestingly, the emergence of daily papers in the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth-century hardly changed this mechanism of imperial translation.

Apart from the changeable, contested and transnational character of Dutch intellectual visions of empire, we can identify a few specific flavours that have left deep marks on Dutch notions of empire—and which thus warrants a specific *Dutch* focus of the study of the Dutch empire. The paramountcy of commerce, the ensuing discourse of efficiency, the principles of orderliness and rational cooperation, the awareness of the Netherland's small size and, increasingly, the benign and developmental nature of Dutch colonialism: all have certainly remained dominant features throughout Dutch colonial history. Moreover, the absence of a monarchical celebration of empire caused political uses of empire to remain conspicuously modest.⁶⁹ This was not the result of a different kind of imperialism, but the result of the Dutch political culture, which was based on ideas of Republicanism, unspectacular monarchism, and a markedly technocratic approach to governance—especially as regards the colonies.⁷⁰ These tropes, and the argument of the ‘exceptional’ character of Dutch colonialism have been extremely resilient, not only in the public imagination, but also among intellectuals, historians and in heritage institutions.⁷¹ Of course, exceptional Dutch colonialism was not. The Dutch empire was in many ways like all other empires: it promised profits and jobs, and an escape to the maladjusted, it boosted national prestige (also in the times of the companies), it stimulated imperial big businesses, it was discursively highly euphemistic, and it was extremely violent. The dissociation of legitimizing activities at home and colonial practices abroad was common to all imperial endeavours.

The myths of colonialism could develop and persist thanks to what we could call the rule of colonial distance. The information gap between metropole and colony facilitated processes of filtering and silencing and facilitated the persistence of the paradoxes of Dutch colonialism—and therefore the myths of exceptionalism. We should be careful to reduce this filtering to a process of malign manipulation. After all, to many Dutch, colonialism was only visible through ships and their shiploads—there are more oil paintings of VOC ships on Dutch roads than of colonial possessions in Asia. Enslaved people were hardly ever depicted, letters home were often sanitized, and novels were written with home audiences in mind. This sheds another light on the way ‘Orientalist’ mechanisms worked, not as a concrete body of knowledge that bluntly supported domination, but as a complicated corpus of contradictory and unstable vistas of empire. Imperialism was always debated and its legitimacy was always unsure. The censored information circuits came under

strain of the advent of the publishing industry and increased mobility between colonies and metropole, but this only resulted in new, racialized and civilizational justifications of colonial rule.

The intellectual history of empire is about the interplay of distance and morals. Many of the intellectual discourses researched in this book were shaped by the necessity to find meanings for colonial practices. The essential confusion of intellectual imperialism seems to be a crucial path to follow in our attempts to make historical sense of empire. In so doing, it is impossible, as many contributions to this volume show, to isolate intellectual discourses from other cultural manifestations of empire, such as policy documents and media. The intellectual history of empire is a cornerstone of what Edward Said called the ‘cultural archive’, which encompasses the entire range of sedimented images and conceptions of the colonial world.⁷² This can, however, impossibly be detached from a wider European experience of empire, and the study of Dutch intellectual imperialism should be much more intensively connected to the surrounding world.

The chapters in this volume also provoke fundamental questions about the relationship between imperial praxis and intellectual ruminations on empire. Their interrelationship is extremely complicated, but, as Alicia Schrikker has shown, colonial reporting and information gathering can provide important sources for analysis.⁷³ More broadly, we are in need of much finer-grained explanations of how imperial information travelled, both between colonial and metropolitan governments as well as through the publishing industry or mass media. As legitimations of empire often had legal and constitutional concerns—we only have to think of the cases of Grotius and Floh, but also of later attempts to fit colonial rule into the legal framework of Dutch or international law—the legal history of intellectual imperialism is a pivot for further study.

Lastly, one of the fundamental ingredients of imperialism is the silencing or muting of the voices of the ‘colonized’. However, from very early onwards, perhaps since the Acehnese embassy to the Dutch Republic in 1602, Asian, African and American men and women have travelled to the Netherlands and have taken part in the intellectual formation of empire and the resistance to it. Likewise in the colonies, the interactions, collaborations and discussions between local men and women and the European foreigners, have shaped the information, knowledge and even ethics of empire. A study of their thinking, their correspondences with the Europeans, their presences, should be part of every attempt to understand empire.

NOTES

1. The latest example is the recent attention for the Eighty-Years War, in a major exhibition in the Rijksmuseum, a large documentary series on national television, and a book: *80 jaar oorlog* (Amsterdam and Antwerpen: Atlas Contact, 2018), which almost completely fail to mention the global wars that ensued from the Dutch conflict in Europe.
2. Although there is an extensive historiography on colonial wars, only few authors offer a general approach. For Dutch colonial wars, see Piet Hagen, *Koloniale oorlogen in Indonesië: Vijf eeuwen verzet tegen vreemde overheersing* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2018); Gerrit Knaap, Henk den Heijer, and Michiel de Jong, *Oorlogen overzee: Militair optreden door compagnie en staat buiten Europa, 1595–1814* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2015). See also Remco Raben, ‘On Genocide and Mass Violence in Colonial Indonesia,’ *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, nos. 3–4 (2012): 485–502.
3. Arthur Weststeijn, ‘Empire of Riches: Visions of Dutch Commercial Imperialism, c.1600–1750,’ in this volume.
4. The manuscript bore no title. *De iure praedae* was the title given by its nineteenth-century editors.
5. The literature on Grotius is overwhelming. See above all Martine Julia van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies (1595–1615)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 488–489.
6. Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*, 118–122.
7. As cited and translated by Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle*, 485.
8. Martine Julia van Ittersum, ‘The Long Goodbye: Hugo Grotius’ Justification of Dutch Expansion Overseas, 1615–1645,’ *History of European Ideas* 36, no. 4 (2010): 386–411, esp. 389; see also Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 122, 131–140.
9. Peter Borschberg, ‘The Value of Admiral Matelieff’s Writings for Studying the History of Southeast Asia, c.1600–1620,’ *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 48, no. 3 (2017): 414–435.
10. Arthur Weststeijn, ‘Republican Empire: Colonialism, Commerce and Corruption in the Dutch Golden Age,’ *Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 4 (2012): 491–509.
11. Pieter van Dam, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, vol. I, part 1, ed. F.W. Stapel (‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1927), 7.
12. Cátia Antunes, ‘Birthing Empire: The States General and the Chartering of the VOC and WIC,’ in this volume.

13. Joost van den Vondel, ‘Het lof der zee-vaert,’ in *De werken van Vondel*, vol. 2, 1620–1627 (Amsterdam: De Maatschappij voor goede en goedkoope lectuur, 1929), 431–455, esp. 452–453: ‘Besoeckt vrymoedelijck de veergelegen oorden,/Maer pleegt oprechtigheyd in handel, en in woorden,/Nocht brandmerckt door geweld niet ‘t Christelijck geloof,/Nocht mest u selven niet op ‘t vette vanden roof.’
14. Joost van den Vondel, *Twee zeevaart-gedichten*, 2 vols., ed. Marijke Spies (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1987); Djoeke van Netten, *Koopman in kennis: De uitgever Willem Jansz Blaeu in de geleerde wereld* (1571–1638) (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2014), 67–70.
15. Joost van den Vondel, ‘Op den optoght der Schutteryen t’Amsterdam (1668),’ in *De werken van Vondel*, vol. 10, 1663–1674 (Amsterdam: De Maatschappij voor goede en goedkoope lectuur, 1937), 609–612: ‘Daer riekt ons ‘t geurige oosten toe,/En schenkt met vollen schoot/Het zeer rijk Y, noit zeilens moe,/Gedurigh vloot op vloot.’
16. Jeroen Giltaij and Jan Kelch, *Lof der zeevaart: De Hollandse zeeschilders van de 17e eeuw* (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 1996).
17. Bert Paasman, ‘De Indisch-Nederlandse literatuur uit de VOC-tijd,’ in *Europa buitenlands: Koloniale en postkoloniale literatuuren in Europese talen*, 2 vols., ed. Theo D’haen (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2002), vol. I, 33–97; Adrienne Maria Zuiderweg, *Batavia berijmd: Een geschiedenis van de Compagniesliteratuur en een overzicht van de Compagniesdichters in Batavia* (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2017).
18. On the contradiction between commercial image and imperial realities of the VOC, see Remco Raben, ‘The Asian Foundations of the Dutch Thalassocracy: Creative Absorption and the Company Empire in Asia,’ in *Empires of the Sea: Maritime Power Networks in World History*, ed. Rolf Strootman, Floris van den Eijnde, and Roy van Wijk (in print; Leiden: Brill, 2019).
19. Michiel van Groesen, *Amsterdam’s Atlantic: Print Culture and the Making of Dutch Brazil* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
20. Benjamin Schmidt, ‘Hyper-Imperialism: The Dutch Vision of Empire and the Expansion of the European World,’ in this volume.
21. A.N. Paasman, *Reinhart: Nederlandse literatuur en slavernij ten tijde van de Verlichting* (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1984); Sarah Adams and Kornee van der Haven, “Er is geen recht voor ons...” Van Hogendorps abolitionistische toneelstuk *Kraspoekol* (1800) als proces tegen de slavernij,’ *Internationale Neerlandistiek* 54, no. 1 (2016): 1–17.
22. For an overview of discussions, see Angelie Sens, ‘*Mensaap, heiden, slaaf*: Nederlandse visies op de wereld rond 1800 (Den Haag: Sdu, 2001), 97–128.

23. Sarah Josephine Adams, ‘Slavery, Sympathy, and White Self-Representation in Dutch Bourgeois Theater of 1800,’ *Early Modern Low Countries* 2, no. 2 (2018): 146–168, esp. 165–166.
24. René Koekkoek, ‘Envisioning the Dutch Imperial Nation-State in the Age of Revolutions,’ in this volume.
25. Jurrien van Goor, ‘From Company to State,’ in *Prelude to Colonialism: The Dutch in Asia*, ed. Idem (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004), 83–98.
26. Alicia Schrikker, ‘Restoration in Java 1815–1830: A Review,’ *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 130, no. 4 (2015): 132–144.
27. Schrikker, ‘Restoration in Java,’ 141.
28. Susan Legêne, *De bagage van Blomhoff en Van Breugel: Japan, Java, Tripoli en Suriname in de negentiende-eeuwse Nederlandse cultuur van het imperialisme* (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1998); Marie-Odette Scalliet, *Antoine Payen: Peintre des Indes Orientales: Vie et écrits d'un artiste du XIXe siècle (1792–1853)* (Leiden: CNWS, 1995); and Andreas Weber, *Hybrid Ambitions: Science, Governance, and Empire in the Career of Caspar C.G. Reinwardt (1773–1854)* (Amsterdam: Leiden University Press, 2012).
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